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[GREVILLE LOOKED AT HIS WIFE IN SORROW AND AMAZEMENT! HE HARDLY UNDERSTOOD JONE.]

## WOMAN AGAINST WOMAN.

### CHAPTER XVII.

"Are you sure you were not mistaken, my darling?" Esther asked, as she sat down on a stool before the fire, crouched up into a knot as usual, her brown eyes fixed on Mary's pale face resting back in the chair.

It was the late evening after that long and, to Greville, incomprehensible fainting fit. He had driven Mary home himself when she was well enough to move; and now she was back in the little room that had been, in deed and in truth, a home to her the last six months.

"You may have been mistaken, Mary, my sweet!" Esther said, eagerly. "There are so many dark men in London; they all look alike at a distance. You say there was not much light on the staircase. You may have been deceived. You are so nervous on this point. Remember you—"

Mary put her hand into Esther's loving one. "I was not mistaken, dear!" she said, wearily. Her brain seemed to be in a whirl. "I

saw my husband Paul to-day. He is one and the same with M. Angelotti. Do you think I could forget his face, or his voice so soft and sweet? If I had not seen him, Esther, I should have known him immediately when I heard his voice!"

Esther caressed the small hand gently, and Mary pushed herself into a sitting position.

"You see, I am not so strong as we both hoped, Esther," she said, unsteadily. "I have imagined myself fully prepared to meet Paul face to face any day without flinching. To-day has put me to the proof. See how I have succeeded! Fainting away in a strange house, like a weak silly child, and causing any amount of trouble and commotion."

"Anybody might faint anywhere!" Esther said, quickly. "I am quite sure Lord Greville had no other thought save sincere distress in your illness."

"I received the greatest kindness," Mary said, timidly and evasively. She never meant to let Esther know how much she had suffered from Jone's strange manner when she had come to herself. "But, all the same, I am vexed and grieved, Esther. It has shown me

how poor and feeble a thing I am. It makes the future a difficult matter to face, my dear, my best friend!"

Esther kissed the little hand tenderly, then put it down and rose to her feet.

"Now," she said, half seriously, half jokingly, "I am going to put on my most manlike air. You have often told me you think I have something of a man's determination and strength in my character. That being so, I am going to use a man's prerogative, and bully you right well!"

"I am not afraid of your bullying," Mary said, with the faintest shadow of a smile.

"I know you treat me with a most fearful lack of respect," Esther retorted, glad to get the matter into a less serious groove. "But I must alter all that. Now be prepared to be lectured. First, however, let me ask you a question. You have, of course, determined in your own little mind that you will give up all thought of going to Barrackbourne next week, have you not?"

"I—I could not go, Esther," Mary faltered.

"You could and can," Esther said quietly.



"What! You are going to sacrifice a pleasant friendship with a woman whom you revere and admire, and who is beginning to love you? Break off a career that is already more than successful? Banish yourself from the world, and bury your beauty and youth in some lonely country hole? Are you going to do all this, and for what? A cur, not a man—a creature who should be trodden in the mud beneath your feet. Come, my Mary, rouse your pride. You have suffered humiliation and misery at this man's hands once in your young life; let him not have the satisfaction of mastering you a second time. You are not the Mary he knew, a poor defenceless, penniless girl, with no one to whom you can turn for help! You are a beautiful woman—a woman whom the world delights to honour—a woman who will find friends ready and willing enough to champion her cause a hundred times, and protect her from a dozen such rats as this! Paul Cosanza, or Angelotti, whichever he calls himself, let him do his worst. You will defy him just the same!"

Mary's pale cheeks had a tinge of colour in them now. Esther's bold, strong, defiant words had fired the spark of her courage and pride. She was silent for a moment longer. There was still a point that she shrank from—she who alone understood what degradation and pain it would mean.

"And if he recognises me, as of course he will, and—ah! insists upon my returning to—Oh, Esther dear, that is beyond me!"

"Let him try!" Esther said, her lips closing firmly, and her eyes gleaming. "M. Angelotti will find it is no easy matter to force a woman to return to him after such conduct as his. Do you remember what I once said to you, my darling? Either you are Paul Cosanza's wife, or you are not. He declared three years ago that you were not, and he has abandoned and deserted you since that time. Now he will find some difficulty in proving any claim to you; for, wife or no wife, the law will decide he has no further hold on a woman whom he has treated as he has treated you. You will be protected from any fear of molestation, believe me; for, if the worst comes to the worst, you shall put your case in Mr. Fraser's hands, and there will be an end of the matter!"

Esther's face flushed as she spoke this tribute to the power of the man she loved.

"I am your friend, Mary!" she went on, gently. "And as your friend I mean to see that your path is clear from all miserable mistakes and follies. You must go on, my dear one. You have put your hand to the plough. You must not turn back. The world is free and open to you as it is to Paul Cosanza. There is no shadow of sin or wrong on your pure soul. If anyone should fall back discomfited and dismayed, that one is not you. We will see Miss Martingale to-morrow. I am sure her advice will coincide with mine!"

Mary rose and put her arms about the girl who had been to her father, mother, brother, sister, and friend mingled in one.

"I will not ask Miss Martingale," she said, softly. "Are you not the best and wisest counsellor in the world? Kiss me, Esther. You have done me good, as you always do. I will be strong. I will be proud, I will be firm. You shall see," with a wan, flickering smile, "how well I shall play my part in the future?"

Ione's half determined dislike to the beautiful Mrs. Arbuthnot became an almost definite hatred. Jealousy was there in full—a vague, unreasoning jealousy, which the merest spark would turn into venom. She by no means shared Greville's interest and anxiety over Mary's condition. She was, indeed, extremely annoyed that anyone should have caused any excitement and sensation in her house but herself. She sneered to herself over Mary's faltered excuses.

"Overworked, not strong!" she repeated, "when the woman looks like a dairymaid! It is all tricks. I know the sort of designing

person she is! Of course, Greville is taken in, and imagines she is going to die of consumption!"

Greville was indeed most grieved over Mary's sudden weakness. The interest and admiration he had always felt for her had deepened in the knowledge that had just come to him.

He recalled the misery in her voice, the despair and hopelessness that had clung about her that bygone night at Ostend; and, as he carried her slight figure into Ione's boudoir, he felt a thrill of tender pity shoot through his heart.

He waited on her, and gave her as much attention as though she had been a queen. Not for his wife could he have shown greater delicacy and thoughtfulness.

"She has overtaxed her strength nursing Otho. You see how fragile she is!" he said to Ione, who made no reply beyond shrugging her shoulders.

When Mary was recovered, and able to sit up, Greville went to order the carriage to be sent round, and in the few moments of his absence Lady Greville managed to convey to Mrs. Arbuthnot a very decided sense of her disapproval and annoyance at the events of the past hour.

She said, "good-bye" in her coldest way. Greville noticed nothing strange; but Mary, with every nerve unstrung and quivering, was only too quick to read the hint.

She gave a heavy sigh of relief and misery as she drove away from the house; and Greville sat looking at her still white face, as she leaned back in a corner of the carriage, and felt a great longing well up in his warm, generous heart to be enabled to help this frail, lovely creature.

He was haunted by the remembrance of her face all the rest of the day. When he returned from driving her home he went to seek Ione.

She was shut in her room, lying down. She was tired, Suzanne told him, so he had no chance of speaking about Mary until dinner-time.

As Otho was so much better Ione had a few guests to dinner—Dick Fraser and M. Angelotti among them.

Conversation had been fairly started. Ione was looking as startling and vividly beautiful as usual, but she was silent; to Dick it seemed as though she were sulky about something.

"So I have a rival this season!" Angelotti said, after a while.

His voice was most musical. He spoke English fluently, but with a slight accent. He smiled for a moment as he spoke now.

"You have, indeed!" a lady declared, on his left hand, "and Mrs. Arbuthnot is no ordinary rival!"

"So I am told, madam," Angelotti said, with his graceful little bow.

"By Jove, yes!" Greville exclaimed, hearing Mary's name. "You have, indeed, a rival at last, Paul; and the funniest thing happened to-day. Your rival was here to-day when you were. You just missed seeing her by the most extraordinary chance in the world!"

"Dead!" Angelotti murmured, in his slow way. His handsome, melancholy eyes were fixed on Ione; he admired her immensely, and he was interested in watching her face. "There is something wrong," he said to himself. "Is it anger or fatigue? She must fatigue soon of *le cher Greville*. She is coquette au bout des ongles, while he—"

Ione looked across at him with her violet eyes, that could be so bold and hard at times.

"Mrs. Arbuthnot's disappointment exceeded yours, Monsieur," she said, with a little laugh that was scarcely genial. "She actually swooned away when you disappeared down the stairs without having seen her!"

Dick started and bit his lip, while Angelotti raised his eyebrows, and smiled a faint smile.

"I am afraid I can hardly lay claim to so much honour, miladi," he said, gravely. To himself he added, "So there is a jealousy already, and of the Arbuthnot. *Ma foi!* there must be something in the woman to have made her mark so soon!"

Greville hastened to explain.

"Mrs. Arbuthnot had been sitting with Otho—by the way, Paul, you must not forget to go and see the little chap after dinner. She insisted upon nursing him for a long time, and I fancy the heat of the room and the fatigue made her faint. Anyhow, she did faint, poor creature, and no mistake about it!"

Dick sat silent, staring down at his plate in a fixed sort of way. This knowledge of Mary's weakness sent a horrible pain through his heart. He lifted his head at Ione's next remark.

"It was certainly a well chosen moment, quite theatrical and dramatic. You will see, M. Angelotti, you must be prepared to be eclipsed for a short time by Mrs. Arbuthnot. The public like sensation for a little while, but art always triumphs in the long run. Your triumph will be only the greater when we have tired of your imitator!"

Dick's face flushed red for a moment, and then paled. Before Greville could speak he had spoken.

"That is a most ungenerous speech, Ione!" he said, quietly, yet with anger thrilling every note of his voice.

Greville's sympathy was with him in the instant—a sympathy that was truly born, for he had felt, he scarcely knew why, a curious sort of discomfort in hearing such words of Mary come from anyone's lips, more especially his wife's.

Nevertheless, he ranged himself figuratively on Ione's side.

"Come! come!" he said, as cheerily as he could. "I won't have you two sparring at one another. Poor Mrs. Arbuthnot, I am sure, would be greatly distressed if she thought she were the subject of a discussion between intimate friends!"

"How like a man!" Ione cried, laughingly, and then she turned to Greville. "My dear, blind, stupid, old husband, you are absolutely the most innocent creature in the world! Why, don't you know that all and any sort of publicity, whether of a pleasant character or not, is just the breath of their nostrils to women of Mrs. Arbuthnot's class and calibre?"

There was a pause of a moment, and every eye was directed upon Dick Fraser, sitting back in his chair, with a somewhat Mephistophelian smile on his lips.

Angelotti caressed his short, dark moustache.

Greville had flushed crimson with mortification and pain. That it should have been his wife who spoke like this of an innocent, unoffending woman!—a woman who, for some strange reason, fate had thrown into his deepest sympathy and interest.

The memory of Mary's pure, exquisite face rose, as it were, like a reproach against this attack. He was silent only a moment, but as he would have spoken, Dick was before him.

"I am sure, Ione," Mr. Fraser said, gently, though coldly, "that you will not condemn Mrs. Arbuthnot so severely when I tell you she is a woman I respect and admire almost beyond description!—a woman who honours me in merely permitting me to call myself her friend!"

"And friendship with you, Fraser, is no empty word!" Paul Angelotti broke in, quietly, softly. He spoke most easily, as though he saw nothing painful or disagreeable in the affairs of the moment. "Do you remember how you testified to your friendship for young Bellairs that night at Malta? I shall never forget you and your clever fists! Fists are such easy and wholesome weapons, better than the finest revolver or the rapier in the world!"



The lady beside him, with quick tact, took up the conversation, and made some remark on the subject of duelling, which arrested the general attention, and bridged over the difficulty caused by Ione's foolish conduct.

Laughter and chat continued until the end of dinner. Everyone seemed in the best of spirits, except the hostess.

Ione sat back in her chair, and positively sulked, replying in monosyllables to the remarks of her companions, biting her lip, and comforting herself with a look of *savoir faire* and dignity that made Greville wince, and Dick long to give her a hearty shaking.

There were those present at this dinner who would not fail to give a garbled account of what had occurred broadcast among society, and the story would not reflect much to Ione's credit. The world will forgive slander, malice, or even crime, but it (that is, the world of fashion) will never pardon bad manners.

Dick knew all this, and Greville knew it too, and he suffered accordingly.

"His punishment is following on his folly," Dick said to himself, sadly. He remembered how he had shrunk from the thought of Ione reigning in his beloved aunt's place, and he knew he had not judged Greville's *fiancée* too harshly.

As for Paul Angelotti, the ordinary dull routine of an ordinary dinner party had been considerably enlivened by this small insight into Ione's nature.

He had, of course, admired Ione when he had met her on board the *Pearl* at Ostend, but he had had little opportunity of gauging her character; and in the one visit he had paid to Barraclough in the autumn he had immediately discovered the matrimonial manœuvres in the air, had shrugged his shoulders with a smile, and had left the Castle quite prepared for the announcement of Greville's marriage with this pretty red-haired nobody.

Ione, as Ione Archdale, had been nothing but a pretty nobody in Angelotti's eyes; but Ione, Lady Greville Earne, was very different. Her startling beauty took proper effect on him; her eccentricities of manner and bearing had a bizarre charm to him. Besides, it pleased him to know that she could not deceive him. She was as transparent in her vain, mean, jealous, paltry nature as the brook of running water. He had a sort of contemptuous pity for the man who had made this glittering sham of a woman his wife, the mother of his children.

Paul Angelotti was a cynic, in the deepest sense of the word. He scoffed at all things pure, holy, and sincere. To him, women were toys made to be wooed for a short amusement, not stars before whom the deepest and best part of a man's life and heart was to be laid.

"For a month or so," he said to himself, as he watched Ione's sullen face. "Carramba! she would be a delight, but for a lifetime! Greville, my dear friend, you have played a false move. You have had a very easy time of it up to now! The future will show the reverse side of the picture, or I am not the man I am!"

His eyes went from Ione to Dick Fraser, who was talking easily and fluently quite as usual, but Angelotti saw that the shadow brought by Ione's words still lay upon his face.

"Another fool!" the Italian said to himself; "all ready and willing at a moment's notice to pledge his honour for and stake his life on a woman's reputation. So Dick is in love with this new singer. *Ma foi!* I confess I have at least a curiosity to behold my rival. Is my crown to be torn from me, and by a woman!" His smile vanished for a moment, and then came back. "Do I not know my world. A new toy for a season—only a few short weeks. My dear Mrs. Arbutnot, make your harvest while you may! To win a success is something I own, but to keep it, *ma cher!* I do not fear you. This time next year you will be forgotten, while I shall remain. *Nous verrons!*"

It was merely an armed truce between Dick and his cousin's wife after that evening Ione had had her first quarrel with Greville on the subject—a short, but a bitter experience to the man who held himself as her slave.

Ione demanded an immediate action on Greville's part. Dick Fraser must be forbidden the house. It was the least Greville could do! Had he not grossly insulted her under her own roof? Was her husband going to permit any man, even his own cousin, to address her as Dick had done?

Greville had listened to the tirade in silence. Ione had stormed about the room, crying with the excitement and hot passion of her anger, flinging herself first into one chair, then into another, talking vehemently, sneering, and losing all command of herself.

Greville had never moved from his position, that of standing beside the fire. Ione's display of temper jarred on him beyond description. There was something in her utter self-forgetfulness and lack of dignity that seemed to put the finishing touch to the pain and disapproval he had felt at dinner the preceding night.

This was no simple child, with a child's petulance and vexation. This was a stormy, passionate woman, who gave evidence, in her unseemly wrath, of a nature the very thought of which as being possessed by his wife gave Greville a cold chill at his heart.

When Ione had exhausted all her incentives upon Dick's luckless head, Greville broke his silence.

"I am sorry, Ione," he said, and for the life of him he could not take the coldness out of his voice. "I am sorry you have spoken like this. You know it is a grief to me to have to thwart you in the very smallest way but"—Greville drew his breath almost like a sigh—"sometimes one is forced to do disagreeable things, my dear little wife. You ask me what is impossible. Dick is not only my cousin; he is my friend, a man I honour, respect, and esteem. As such he must ever be welcome to my house wherever I may be!"

"You put your cousin before your wife, then?" Ione said, sullenly, yet with a sharp, little laugh.

"You know that would be impossible," Greville replied, with gentle dignity.

"I am afraid I can't agree with you," Ione retorted, laughing again, in the short, sneering way that jarred on Greville's every nerve.

"Most men, I think would have resented such an insult, being put upon their wives as Mr. Fraser put upon me to-night; that is, providing of course that they cared for their wives in the very least. Yet you—" Ione did not continue; she jerked her shoulders, suddenly, and swung herself to and fro in her chair.

Greville looked at her in sorrow and amazement.

"My dear one," he said, a little unsteadily when he spoke. "This is not like you. This is not my pearl, my little wife, who says such hard and cruel things! Surely, Ione, you could not even imagine that I do not care for you, and for your dignity? You will never find me wanting to uphold you, my darling, in every sense of the word. But to-night—"

"But to-night," Ione broke in, "you refuse to do what is your simple duty!"

"Yes, Ione," Greville said, in a low voice. "I have tried to shirk my duty. I have tried to spare myself the pain of hurting you in the smallest way. My duty is not to quarrel with Dick. It is to tell you plainly and frankly, my dearest, my love, coming across to her and holding out his hands, 'that it was not Dick who was wrong to-night. It was you!'"

As long as she lived Ione never forgave her husband those words. They stung her vanity to the quick. They were mortifying in many senses. Her mother's shrewdness was proved in them—her own inferior quality clearly shown, and worse than this in her eyes. Her power over Greville was here demonstrated as being far less than she had imagined.

From her earliest childhood Ione had been

bored by and sneered at all goody-goody sentiments, to use her own name. Greville's extraordinary honesty and frank, straightforwardness assumed annoying proportions in her eyes, and raised up all sorts of difficulties in the future.

"I believe he is nothing but a prig!" she said, to herself when she was alone and the quarrel had been ended gently. She laughed softly to herself, "Well, when I am tired of you, Greville, I shall know how to make you suffer, and if you go on much more as you did to-night it will not be long before I am tired—very tired," Ione said, emphatically. She was too angry or excited for sleep, so she sat with one of her favourite French novels before her fire, and tried to read. As she sat there, her eyes on her book, her mind recalled as in a vision the events of the day. Mary's visit, her illness, Greville's interest, her own jealousy and annoyance. Then the dinners, with Angelotti's dark eyes gazing into her's, spurring her on, as it were, to attack one whom she knew already she hated.

The colour rose to her face as Dick's quiet, grave reproof came to her mind, and she closed her lips in a thin, ugly line. If Dick was to go unpunished, it would be strange if Ione could not find some way of revenging herself on the cause of her discomfiture; and in the world of fashion Mrs. Arbutnot, a woman singing to earn her bread, would not be able to fight and conquer so clever and powerful an enemy as Lady Greville Earne.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

THE journey down to Barraclough, the fresh country air, the joy of seeing his dear "grannie" again, seemed to put new life into little Ocho, and therefore the house party, which had been almost abandoned for the moment, was reconstructed, and the Castle was all alive with expectancy.

Lady Barraclough tried to welcome Ione with sincere and affectionate warmth, but, somehow, she felt that the meeting between her son's wife and herself lacked the ring of genuine pleasure, and, on Ione's side at least, was full of artificial effusiveness. The Countess could not rid her mind of a feeling that Ione had been partly to blame for Ocho's illness. At any rate, she was grieved and vexed beyond measure that the boy should have been deprived of his nurse by Ione's orders; but no word was spoken between them, and to all outward appearance there was perfect harmony of thought and feeling between Greville Earne's mother and wife.

The house party was composed of some of the smartest of the smart world, and the great excitement was the forthcoming entertainment in honour of Lady Barraclough's birthday. Ione had suggested theatricals, and Greville had seconded it with an idea—why should they not have an operatic instead of a dramatic performance?

It could scarcely be called an amateur one, when Paul Angelotti and Mrs. Arbutnot were to take part in it; but apart from these two splendid artists, the company would be gathered from among the guests.

Angelotti arrived on the same day as the Earnes, and was received cordially by Lady Barraclough, and gushed over by most of the women present.

He was so handsome, so strangely mysterious in manner—no one quite understood Paul Angelotti. His dark face, with its large melancholy eyes, had made many a woman's heart beat quickly beneath her jewels and lace. His quietness, his soft, low voice, his reticence, and his habit of living entirely in his own life, gave him a stronger interest and a deeper flow of sympathy than falls to the lot of most men. There were one or two among the women maids and matrons whom he had conquered in his three years' triumph, who could have given the world the lie direct when it spoke with eloquent praise on Angelotti's devout life, on his pureness of spirit, his lovely

hermit-like existence; but the power that had brought these frail, foolish ones into his spell laid a seal upon their lips, and Angelotti was never known save as the world saw him.

With Lady Barrackbourne he was a favourite because of his devoted friendship for Greville. With Greville he was a favourite because of his music, and his apparently grave, solitary existence.

"I envy you, Paul," Greville said, sometimes. "You can live in the world and yet beyond it. What is your secret?"

"Philosophy," Angelotti would answer, with his faint, inscrutable smile, and the smile would deepen for a moment when Greville had left him. "To compare myself with me!" he would think, with a sort of sublime contempt. "Poor, simple fool!"

Ione threw herself eagerly into the forthcoming theatricals. She cast herself for an important part, and informed M. Angelotti he must coach her in the singing of her rôle.

She knew that by monopolising him in this way she would make most of the other women jealous; and, moreover, she did not intend to make a failure if possible.

It was a bold experiment to sing against such an artist as Mary Arbuthnot; but Ione was not nervous, and with the courage of ignorance determined on her action.

Mary was to join them four days before the performance. She had received the music of her part in town, and was to arrive perfect. All but for rehearsals Ione had a week before her.

"You must make me sing like an angel!" she said, imperiously, to Angelotti.

"That which already exists cannot be made again," he answered, and the while he winced almost perceptibly, as Ione sang out boldly in her clear, strong, unmusical voice.

They were closeted together for hours practising and rehearsing.

"Are you not jealous of M. Angelotti?" one of the guests suggested to Greville, with some spite, for she did not like Ione.

"Jealous of Paul!" Greville laughed. "No—that could never be—never!"

"Why not?" was the next question.

"Well, I don't know exactly," Greville answered, wrinkling his brow; "only, somehow, it does seem possible. Dear old Paul! The most harmless person in the world, Lady Agnes. I could not be jealous of him if I tried; besides," Greville added, with a touch of seriousness in his voice, "I am never jealous of my little wife. I trust her fully, blindly, implicitly!"

The lady, left to herself, shrugged her shoulders, and gave a little laugh.

"Poor Greville!" she said, and then she turned with a start. "Why, M. Angelotti, you here! I thought you were with Lady Greville in the music room? A moment sooner, and you would have heard yourself dismissed!"

"By Lady Agnes?" Paul said, with a smile, "*quel honneur!* And what was said? Something nice, I hope."

Lady Agnes Gray laughed.

"Oh! very nice. Lord Greville was declaring you the most harmless man in the world—one incapable of rousing anyone's jealousy. It is a good character, M. Angelotti!"

"And suits me," Angelotti smiled. "Greville, you see, knows me thoroughly."

His dark eyes met the handsome, though cynical ones opposite to him. There was an instant's pause; then both smiled, as it were, involuntarily, and Lady Agnes changed the conversation.

The day of Mrs. Arbuthnot's arrival came at last. Ione was not very amiable on this occasion. Clever and unscrupulous as she was, she was yet lacking in the perfection of worldly wisdom.

For instance, it was as clear as the sun at noon to Angelotti that his beautiful pupil was working herself into a bad temper for no other reason than that she disliked Mrs. Arbuthnot, and was jealous of her.

"So my rival comes to-day!" he said to her as they went to the music room.

"Your rival!" Ione said, scornfully. "The mere idea of Mrs. Arbuthnot being your rival is absolutely absurd!"

Paul smiled, and looked up into the large violet eyes beside him. He had seen quickly that Ione was piqued and angry at his apparent lack of admiration for her—she, who was accustomed to have every man at her feet as soon as they saw her.

It pleased him to vex her. It pleased him to think that he had the power to touch this pretty mass of selfishness in her most vital part.

Ione had, of course, been fully prepared for a complete subjugation of Angelotti. For that had worn her newest and most eccentric gowns posed in a hundred different ways, and graciously bestowed on him the utmost exclusive honour of her presence.

Paul was amused by her, but not deceived. No matter how soft her violet eyes could look he knew that the small organ called a heart was lacking altogether in Ione's shapely, graceful person, and he felt a contemptuous thrill of pity for the man who had built the happiness of his future life round about this cold, selfish petty-natured woman.

Despite the absence of the heart, however, Paul knew he could exercise what power he liked over Ione, and he told himself languidly that he would begin that amusement when the mood seized him. It pleased him to be so inclined this day.

"Such words from your lips make me the proudest man in the world!" he said.

Ione looked down at him, and her pulses quickened. So he, too, could not withstand her fascinations.

"Did I say anything nice?" she asked, languidly. "I don't feel as if I could even think a nice thought to-day, I am so cross!"

Paul took her hand, covered with jewels, and carried it to his lips.

"Let me soothe you!" he said, softly, and he began to sing.

Ione stood with her hand on his shoulder. She would far rather have listened to words of admiration for herself than all the songs in the world, and Paul knew this right well, and chose to vex her anew.

The afternoon wore away, passed in this half-veiled flirtation, but not advancing Paul's subjugation very much; and when they left the music room and went to join the others in the large, quaint old room, Ione's temper was certainly not improved.

Otho was running to and fro—a delicate, fair-haired little creature, in a black velvet costume.

"Mrs. Arbuthnot has one keen admirer!" Lady Agnes said to Ione. "That child has worked himself into a state of excitement over her arrival!"

Ione felt a longing to take Otho in her strong, lithe hands, and fling him away from her altogether. Her hatred for the boy was grown stronger of late. Whenever she heard of the death of a child of his age she would pause and say to herself,—

"Why is it not Otho? Why does he not die? It is only wishing him to suffer to wish him to live a poor, weak, sickly creature like that!"

Angelotti caught the small Earl in his arms.

"Who is coming? What is all this?" he asked.

Otho wriggled from his hold, "Mrs. Arbuthnot! Mrs. Arbuthnot!" he cried, and flying across the hall he precipitated himself upon a slight woman's figure that had come that moment through the doorway, escorted by Dunstan and Greville.

Ione sneered as she saw Mary kneel down and put her arms about the child.

"Always posing for theatrical effect!" she said in Angelotti's ear.

He smiled. He was unconsciously interested in this woman who had just come. His rival! It was a strange word. It amused

him. He drew back to the great, tall fireplace, whilst all those who knew Mrs. Arbuthnot pressed forward to greet her.

"My mother is in her room, eagerly expecting you, but you must have some tea first," Greville said.

Angelotti frowned slightly as he heard the answer.

"Oh, no! please let us go to Lady Barrackbourne at once," Mary said.

The Italian looked across at the speaker; her back was turned to him.

"A beautiful voice!" he said to himself.

"If she sings as she speaks, the world has shown wisdom for once!"

Greville was leading the way to his mother's room when he looked backwards.

"Ah!" he said, with a smile. "This must be delayed no longer. Mrs. Arbuthnot, will you stop just one instant? I have someone here whom you must graciously receive. One—who—Paul, come forward! Mrs. Arbuthnot, may I present my friend, and I trust in the future your friend also, M. Paul Angelotti."

Mary paused a moment, then advanced and held out her hand.

"I am pleased to know you at last, Monsieur Angelotti," she said, quietly, looking straight into the dark eyes that were fixed on her beautiful face, with an expression that was almost one of agony and fear combined. "It is a pleasure too long deferred."

Paul Angelotti stood transfixed for the moment, then he seemed to arouse himself with an effort; he stepped forward, and put his hand into the small one outstretched. It was cold as ice.

"The pleasure, as you say, Mrs. Arbuthnot, has been too long deferred," he said, in a voice from which the music was all gone; and as Mary, with grave composure, bowed and turned away with Greville, Paul drew a deep breath that was almost like a sob of pain.

"So," he said to himself, with a queer expression round his mouth. "So we meet again, do we, my Mary, and like this! And you are going to fight me, are you? Not wise, Mary, not wise! You have known me once. You should not try to come to war with me. I am too strong for you, as you will see!"

(To be continued.)

## HIS ICE QUEEN.

—10—

### CHAPTER XVI.

"FRANK, THERE IS A MYSTERY IN MY LIFE WHICH EVEN I CANNOT FATHOM."

MR. BRAMLEY took a good deal more than his half-hour, but the time had seemed very short to Frank and Geraldine. Still, when he came, she let him take her lover away, for the doctor was still watching her mother, and she was anxious to go back to her.

So, promising to return in the evening to hear how Mrs. FitzHerbert progressed, the two gentlemen strolled to the Rectory. Frank dressed carefully, and came down ready for dinner, notwithstanding the intermediate meal which the Rector had pressed upon him on his return from his work at the lake.

Frank and Mr. Bramley had always liked one another. There was an innate honesty in each which drew them together, and made them congenial company.

"Stanley, my boy, I have guessed your secret, and wish you joy!" said the elder man, heartily. "Miss Geraldine is a little stiff at first, but I do not dislike her for it. Some of the gushing young damsels of the day are quite alarming. I don't mean that I think they have designs upon an old foggy like myself, I'm not vain enough for that; but my alarm is as to what effect such women will have upon their children, and upon the world at large through them."



"The rising generation of boys may take a back seat. I wouldn't object to that if the back seat were comfortable; but it is not, and, what is more, they are expected to pay heavily for it. The Yankee girl who outs out her lover in the run for labour, expects him nevertheless to 'foot her bills'."

"Now this is scarcely fair, is it? But what is to be done? It is of no use for men and women to struggle together as they are doing now! They had better give it up quietly, and change places altogether. They could smoke their pipes as they nursed the babies and mended the stockings, and I don't see that they need be altogether miserable."

"Let the women be the bread-winners if they want to be! I confess that they are going up in stature if in nothing else, and, from all one hears, in intellect too. Go to a seaside watering place, and watch the walkers on the promenade for half an hour! You will see that the race now consists of tall, very tall, women, and decidedly short men! There are exceptions, of course, but we are taught that they prove the rule."

"Oh!" laughed Frank, "the ladies will soon tire of the work. We were built stronger animals on purpose to do it for them!"

"Egad sir, I don't know. Feel the arms of some of the lawn tennis girls! There are muscles for you!"

"My dear Mr. Bramley, I wouldn't for the world. I should get my ears boxed, and the stronger they were the more afraid I should be to take such a liberty. I have a great respect for tennis girls, I can assure you; they know how to take care of themselves."

"Ah, my boy, they're proud of their strength, I can tell you. I have had many a one offer me her biceps to feel!"

"Ah! parsons are always privileged beings for some reason or reasons unknown. The most careful mamma will trust her daughter with black cloth, but on no account with red!"

There was a merry twinkle in Mr. Bramley's eyes.

"Quite right, quite right! We must have something in exchange for giving up the pleasures of this wicked world!"

"Ah! but do you?" laughed Frank.

"Well, I suppose we are expected to, dear boy; and if we don't, why, we are wrong, and not the system! And now tell me, did you send a letter to the Towers by the Earl's man? Messages get wrongly delivered!"

"Yes; I wrote to the Countess, and also to Lady Marie. There can be no mistake! I was afraid he might carry them some cook-and-bull story, and scare them."

"Quite right. How would it affect you if Lady Marie married your cousin?"

"Affect me! I should be as glad to see her happy as she would be to see me so!"

"Ah! but what would Sir Godfrey say to it? Might it not influence your position with him?"

"Can't say at all. He has the right to do as he likes with his own. Whatever happens, I have no intention of being an idle man. I am prepared for any caprice upon his part. I owe a great deal to my uncle Godfrey, and am fond of him; but I always feel that I am on unstable ground, and that any day he may inform me I am nothing to him."

"Is he so uncertain?"

"That is scarcely the word to describe him. He is utterly intolerant! You must follow his wishes in everything!"

"Have you done so? People said he wished you to marry Lady Marie!"

"People were right for once, although that terrible 'on dit' is the very war-cry of mistakes; but the good little woman herself got me out of that scrape, and told my uncle plainly that I was not the 'young man to her mind.' Now I call that pluck on a girl's part! It was awfully good of Lady Marie!"

Mr. Bramley laughed immoderately.

"Good! It was splendid of her to stand in the gap! The girl has courage! You should have seen her when that devil of a

horse ran away with her! Not the faintest sign of fear. She tried all she knew to conquer him; and when she couldn't she quietly settled herself down in the saddle to see it out. There is a great deal in Lady Marie St. Clare! I confess I am surprised you did not take to her. I think I should myself if I were twenty or thirty years younger. As it is, I admire that beautiful woman, Mrs. FitzHerbert, as it is respectable for a middle-aged country parson to do. She makes me feel that I have blood in my veins at fifty-five, I can tell you; but, somehow, I have my fears that it will never come to anything. She is a peculiar woman, Stanley. She is wonderfully friendly and kind; but be a little more tender and impressive than usual, and down goes the thick brown blind of reserve, and you can get nothing more out of Mrs. FitzHerbert!"

"It is her way of telling you that she wishes to retain her present position with you."

"Yes!" he answered, quaintly. "No doubt; but I don't want to keep it, you see; so it's natural I should wish to break down the reserve. Still, I do not want to quarrel with her. She and her daughter make life at Harlington a far more pleasant and bright thing to me!"

"Then, admitting that, I should accept the 'half loaf,' and not annoy the lady. She might not forgive you. Beautiful as she is, there is something immovable—almost implacable—about her face. She looks so quiet and determined!"

"I don't think the daughter lacks those attributes either," laughed the parson. "She and her mother are very much alike, I think, in mind as well as body."

"No doubt. I like a firm woman—one with a character."

"So do I if the firmness is not brought into force against me! Poor Mrs. FitzHerbert! I am afraid she had a *mauvais quart d'heure* this afternoon! I was so much taken up watching your efforts in behalf of her daughter that I never saw her danger. It must have been a shock to her nervous system to be plunged into that cold water!"

"I don't know about the nervous, but it was a decided startler to the system, I can answer for it. I expected to find myself minus my toes, but they still keep the 'number of their mess,' I am glad to say. Bramley, what time are you going round to the Priory?"

"Young blood!" replied the other. "You're dying to get back, I suppose."

"Well, I really was not thinking of myself this time, but of them. They ought not to be disturbed late."

"Right you are, my boy; I sit corrected. We will drink the health of the ladies when we return. Stanley, what does that brown blind mean? I really think Mrs. FitzHerbert likes me!"

"It means, I should say, that she does, as you say, like you, and wishes to continue your friend; but that she loves, or has loved someone else, and for their sakes, perhaps, is disinclined to listen to affection from any other."

"Can't say," answered the Rector, reflectively. "Anyway, they receive no visitors at their house, save those who have called upon them in the neighbourhood. In fact, Mrs. FitzHerbert told me herself that she came here to avoid society, and get away from the hollow world of fashion. By-the-bye, I think you will have a rival in Lord Northby; and, what is more, I believe the mother approves of him."

Frank grew a shade paler. He had taken an inveterate dislike to the man that very afternoon.

It had been terrible to see him in possession of his darling, as it were; that pang must, he feared, have been jealousy, but he would not show it.

"So I saw," he said. "But the daughter, has she shown that she likes his lordship? He

is a weak-looking creature, and surely not worthy of her!"

"As a man, no! There is little or nothing in him, but he can offer her a coronet, and a very fine establishment, one of which, in fact, any girl might be proud. For the rest I cannot answer you. Miss Geraldine is not given to showing her feelings, or so I should judge. We'll delay our weeds, and discuss them over a glass of grog before we turn in. Now, I'm ready if you are, Stanley!"

Frank announced himself waiting, and the two men sauntered over once more to the Priory.

"I know this road pretty well," remarked Mr. Bramley. "There are few days I don't travel it. I really cannot think what I used to do before the FitzHerberts came here."

So near were they that by that time they had reached the door.

"Mrs. FitzHerbert was asleep," so said the butler; "and Miss Geraldine was waiting for them in the drawing-room."

She advanced with a hand to each.

"How good of you to come," she said. "I am happier now, but still anxious, of course. The doctor has a professional nurse with mother. He would not trust her to me. He knows best, of course, but I felt it to be rather hard. Who can love her as I do?"

"No one, of course. That is, just in the same way," replied Mr. Bramley, clearing his throat somewhat huskily. "But those who do not love, often prove safer nurses, for they care less for the patient's feelings, and simply make them do what is right. Invalids will constantly disobey members of their own family, but, strange to say, seldom a paid nurse."

"The doctor says if mother has a good long sleep she will probably awake out of danger, so she must on no account be disturbed."

"Heaven grant that she may," replied the parson, gravely. "Well, I'll toddle home now, and light up. Stanley, stay as long as you like, or come as soon as you please!" and, with a nod to Geraldine, Mr. Bramley took himself away.

He came in and out so often that the formalities of hand-shaking had been almost laid aside.

A bright "good morning," and an upward glance of welcome was what was more usually bestowed upon this clerical "tame cat" at the Priory, and he liked it far better than being made a stranger of. Frank gave him a grateful look as he went out of the door.

"A good old fellow is Mr. Bramley! Don't you think so, Geraldine?"

"I am sure of it—never more so than now," and she smiled up at him.

"Then you are glad he has left us for a parting word?"

There was one flash from those glorious eyes, and that was answer enough. He drew her to him, and looked down into their depths.

"My darling, how beautiful you are!" he said, very tenderly, while an inflection of passion crept into his voice, and made it low and tremulous. "How proud I shall be to wear you when I have won you!"

"I do not go from my promises, Frank. You can claim me when you will."

"When you love me, dear—that hour, that moment, I will ask your mother to give you to me. Will she consent, Geraldine?"

"Why should she not?" asked the girl, warmly. "Your friends might object, but why should mine?"

"What! my family object to you? That would be bad taste!"

"Frank, it is better that you should know that you may be made to suffer through your love for me. I shall not blame you, if, like that other, you cannot face it. I did blame him, but I do not expect as much as I used to do from anyone. Before I met you I expected nothing, believed in no one; but now—"

"You believe in me, Geraldine?"

"I am beginning to do so."

"Then go on, my own! Faith is the very

groundwork of love, confidence the cornerstone of happiness."

"And what, if when I find you are dearer to me than life, you then feel that, even though you love me, you cannot make me your wife? Frank, I never do things by halves," she continued, earnestly. "I had thought never again to love or trust any one, and under ordinary circumstances I could have carried out my intention; but you have been so good to me, you have done so much for me and mine—"

"You are under no obligations to me whatever, dear! Put that thought from your mind," he said, hastily.

"Yet I owe you my life?"

"The fact repays me, tenfold!"

"Frank, I must tell you all—that is, all I know. I cannot receive your love like an impostor. Not to-night, but come to me to-morrow morning, say at eleven, and you shall hear all I can tell you. There is no engagement between us, so you would be blameless if you went away. There must be none until you have heard my strange story. Frank, there is a mystery in my life which even I cannot fathom. I must know whether I dare love you, or whether it must stand between us!"

She spoke as one trying to keep down her feelings under a cloak of coldness, but the covering fell aside and revealed the warmth within.

"I will come, Geraldine, and hear all you have to say," he answered, holding both her hands in his; "but I can answer you now. If, as you say, you are enveloped in a mystery, I have faith in you. Whoever is to blame, my pure white snow queen, it is not you. Good-night!"

"Good-night," she whispered, and laid her lips to his.

## CHAPTER XVII.

"THE HAPPIEST WOMAN IS SHE WHO NEVER HAS BUT ONE LOVER, AND HE IS THE KING OF HER HEART!"

THERE was considerable astonishment at Mear Norton Towers at the non-return of Frank Stanley, which culminated when the dog-cart came back without him in the evening. They had not been able to keep it from busy-brained Marie, for she plied her questions to her mother freely, and the girl became feverish and anxious.

"Something has happened!" she prophesied over and over again, and when the letters came she held out her hands for hers in all eagerness.

"You are very fond of Mr. Stanley, darling!" said her mother, with a kindly smile, remembering what she had seen in the morning; and Marie, having no idea of any misconstruction of her actions, smiled too, and warmly admitted the fact.

Had the Countess seen Frank's letter to her daughter she might have understood the matter better. As it was she was thoroughly mistaken in her views. Frank wrote;—

"DEAR KIND LADY MARIE,—

"You must be wondering what has become of me. Do you remember my presentiment that I should be wanted this afternoon? Well, I was very much wanted.

"There was a terrible accident upon the lake at Black Breeches, and I cannot be thankful enough that I was present.

"The calamity arose from the ice being too crowded with skaters, and I tremble to think what might have become of my beautiful 'Ice Queen' had not timely help been at hand.

"Yes, Marie, I saved her! Was not that a privilege? And now she seems, as it were, to belong to me, and that is such a pleasant thought.

"I could understand a man loving any nice woman because he saved her; but when he is thus able to preserve the life already so dear to

him it is better still. I am not vain enough to think that others might not have done as much for my darling—of course they might; but still there is almost a panic at first when these things take place, and Geraldine might not have been the first thought of anyone else as she was with me, because I love her.

"There was plenty of work to do, I can assure you, so many were immersed, but only one life was lost.

"My Ice Queen is none the worse, I hope and believe; nay, she is, in my opinion, better. I told you I should see those wonderful eyes glow and soften.

"I have done so, Marie, and, as I thought, love is the keystone of the dear girl's better self.

"Some trouble has frozen her. I shall learn probably what that is to-morrow, as I am then going to see her again.

"To-night I remain here at her wish. You cannot think how she seems to lean on me in her trouble.

"Her trouble! Why, I have not yet told you about that. Mrs. FitzHerbert was as nearly drowned as possible. She was stuck in the mud under the water, and when I found her she was quite insensible. Of course she couldn't move even to try and help herself, poor thing! Geraldine is more grateful for her mother's life than her own, and I am sure I hope she will be spared to her; but I gather, more from the doctor's reticence than anything else, that she is still in danger.

"I shall remain with Mr. Bramley until Geraldine can spare me. What a jolly, kind old fellow Bramley is! I wish all the persons were like him. There is no professional humbug about him at all; and yet, in his own way, he does a lot of good in Harlington, I hear. Between you and me and the post, I wish the widow would reward him for all his devotion; but that is his secret.

"I have written my apologies to the Countess! I know I need not stand upon ceremony with my kind friends at Mear Norton Towers. Bramley will drive me back when I find I can leave here.

"Good-night, little friend! Sleep well, and let me find you really better on my return. I think, I hope, all will be well with me and my great love. Rejoice with me, Marie! How glad I shall be when you tell me I may rejoice with you.

"Yours ever,

"FRANK STANLEY."

The note to the Countess was merely one of explanation and apology, and not so voluminous; and seeing Marie engrossed in her letter she left the room to tell the Earl the reason Frank had not returned.

"I have already heard a wonderful account from the butler, which was given him by the groom; and if all he says is true, we have reason to be proud of the conduct of our future son-in-law. He seems to have done wonders. Poor little Marie, how anxious she has been, but she will be all right now she knows he is safe and sound!"

A figure, unnoticed before, moved among the shadows in the softly lighted room, and came forward.

"I have not been an intentional eaves-dropper, Lord Carstairs," said Captain Hamilton, "but I had fallen asleep in that easy arm-chair; and when your voices awoke me, I wove them somehow into my just dreamed dream, and did not realise that I was awake at all, until the full meaning of your words were upon me! 'Your future son-in-law' you certainly said, and you spoke of being proud of him! Pray tell me what you mean? Has Lady Marie after all mistaken her feelings towards my cousin, and found out at last where her innocent heart is centred?" and he stood before them with pale face and saddened eyes.

"I am afraid for your sake, Hamilton, that that really is the case," answered the Earl, and stopped short, for the mental pain in the features before him was great.

The Countess went to him with friendly hand, and clasping his, spoke most kindly.

"We like you so much, Captain Hamilton. We are grieved to see you suffer; and, to be honest, we are very fond of Mr. Stanley too. If only we had two daughters, we could have loved both our sons-in-law, believe me! As it is, it is not for us to choose, but Marie. All we desire is her true happiness!"

"That's it, wife. It is for Marie to choose, and for us all to abide by her decision. Hamilton, you love her well enough, I am sure, to think more of her happiness than your own! You will, I am certain, throw no clouds over her joy from your own disappointment. Remember that it will be no light thing for us to part with her. Let us always be friends. Marie will still be a bond of union between us, my lad!" and he laid his hand upon his shoulder affectionately.

"It is settled then? She has chosen?" faltered the Captain.

"We believe so, Godfrey. Come, don't take it to heart so much! Be a man."

Godfrey Hamilton stood before them as one stunned. Many of Marie's winning looks and actions had raised an earnest hope in his mind that she really liked him, and he had let his whole heart go out to her, passionately and unreservedly. Now it was a terrible blow to him to find that she had chosen another. He actually staggered under it.

"Pardon me to-night," he murmured, in a voice all unlike his own. "I have been fool enough to hope. I ought to have known better. I ought to have been well aware that I am plain, uninteresting and poor, and that she would be most unlikely to give me a thought in that way. Most unnecessarily she has thought it needful to be grateful, because I had the pleasure of rendering her a very small and simple service. I mistook her gratitude for growing affection. She is in no wise to blame! I exonerate her entirely. The fault is my own, as I said before. I ought to have known better! You tell me to be a man!" His voice, which had risen to passionate pathos, here broke and faltered. "Excuse me to-night," he ended. "I will be a man to-morrow," and before they could answer him he was gone.

"Poor fellow!" said the Earl. "He is hard hit. I am truly sorry for him."

"So am I," replied the Countess, softly. "My dear, Godfrey Hamilton's is no usual love at all. He cares more for her than Frank Stanley does by far—his is an ordinary affection only. Still, he is a better match, of course. There is no doubt about his inheriting his uncle's wealth if he follows out his pet scheme, and weds our darling; and I am not afraid for her.

"If Frank has won her heart she will be happy, for he is naturally nice, and will make her a kind husband, I am sure; but I hope Marie will never know what suffering she has caused another—it would render her miserable. The happiest woman is she who never has but one lover, and he is the king of her heart! She is saved much uncertainty and many regrets, if nothing else. I cannot bear to hear girls speak of the pleasures of conquest. They would not if they in the least understood or realised the suffering which is often inflicted, and the sin which sometimes follows, the jealousies which are awakened, and the miseries which lurk in their shadows."

"Mother," laughed the Earl, "you are growing quite eloquent! Young folks will be young folks. You can't put sage heads on green shoulders. Why, my love, I recollect before you married me you had a score of admirers. I had hard work to gain you!"

"That is just it, dear!" she answered, more than half sadly. "I speak from experience. My youthful flirtations cause me many regrets now. When I hear that any man is dead who loved me I wonder whether I embittered his life."

"Well, wife, if you did, you have sweetened mine!" said the Earl, kindly. "So you must put that in the scale against the other. I have



no fault to find with you whatever. You have made me very happy!"

"Thank you for your kind words, husband mine! I wish I could think as well of myself. But I feel often that I may be responsible for having set the ball rolling for some who have run quickly down the hill."

"Tut, tut, good wife! If all women had such tender consciences there would be no fun in the world at all. The most skittish fillies often settle down best into double harness. I have not one thing to say against you. You liked me the best; you married me, and you have been true to me. I'm perfectly satisfied."

"So am I," answered the Countess, with a smile. "If Marie is as happy as I have been with you I shall be indeed glad," and the Earl and Countess kissed like lovers, for all that they had been two decades wedded.

Lady Marie read her letter to the end, then remained very quiet indeed.

In fancy, she went over that scene at the lake. She knew the spot, and could well picture it all.

So Frank had saved Geraldine, and her mother, and the others too. How proud she would have been had he been her lover!

Her colour rose, her fingers worked. She had not yet quite schooled her warm, loving heart, and she had cared for Frank very much while that bright young dream had lasted.

He was, however, only her friend. His love belonged to Geraldine FitzHerbert, who she must try and care for, for his sake; but, so far, trying to care for her rather wearied Marie.

She could hardly be expected to be really fond, all at once, of the girl who had, with no effort of her own, so soon supplanted her.

Frank had tried to love her, and could not succeed; but his heart had flown to Geraldine. Her sweet eyes were full of tears as she thought of it, but she had a brave heart, and choked them down.

"I am not alone," she murmured, softly. "If he saved her, Godfrey Hamilton saved me. If he loves her, Godfrey loves me. I feel it. I need no telling. I should not complain, for he is staunch and true—a rock to lean on; and I, you I am fond of Godfrey. I owe him much. He will help me against myself. I will tell him all, all the truth, and he will love me still. But Frank! He must never know—never, never! I should die of shame!"

She sunk her glowing face upon her hands. "To give one's love unasked," she murmured, "that is woman's shame, her most humble hour when she learns that bitter truth."

Then she folded the letter, and kissed it once.

"Good-bye, Frank," she said, in a low voice. "May you be happy with the woman of your choice. I will be weak no more."

She slipped out of bed, and laid the letter upon the flames.

"There! your secret is safe," she whispered, "and I begin a new life to-morrow."

"What! out of bed, my darling?" asked her mother's voice, in surprise. "What are you doing?"

"Burning a letter, mother mine! A very prosaic action, is it not?" she answered, cheerfully, as she placed her arms about her neck, and kissed her; "and now I am going back to bed," and the Countess was satisfied, because Lady Marie smiled.

## CHAPTER XVII.

"DID I NOT PROMISE YOU LAST NIGHT TO BE A MAN TO-DAY?" SAID CAPTAIN HAMILTON.

CAPTAIN HAMILTON had set himself a hard task to be a man before the morning; that, in common parlance, meaning, that he must fight down his own bitter sorrow and disappointment; and having expunged his feelings, and put aside self, he was to appear before the woman he loved with a smile, and listen

patiently to her talk of her coming happiness with another.

It was not easy to do, as a sleepless night testified.

He spent it pacing his room, and he loved Lady Marie as dearly when morning broke as he had done when gloaming preceded the darkness; nay, more, he knew full well that his love was undying, that she must ever be what she now was to him, his brightest and best. Still, there was no need for her to know it; he must keep his secret, and that he could do for her sake.

He could leave her to her own joy, unbroken by the knowledge of his sufferings, and to do this he schooled himself through the night.

The Earl and Countess were shocked at his appearance at breakfast the following morning.

A sleepless night alone makes a man look miserable and dejected, but such an one as he had spent tells too plain a tale to be mistaken.

"Godfrey," said the Earl, kindly, "you don't look up to much! May I suggest a brandy and soda?"

"Thanks, no! I should prefer a good strong cup of coffee."

"You look as if you need something at once. I am afraid you have had a bad night?" remarked the Countess, her eyes resting upon him with an expression of regret.

"Well, Lady Carstairs, I have not had a good one, but I hope to trouble no one with my feelings. You have been as kind as a mother to me, and I thank you from my heart. My visit to Mears Norton Towers is not to be forgotten through life. It has been a really happy one—my only peep at home for a long time."

"I hope you will always give us as much of your company as you can, Captain Hamilton. You will ever find a welcome, where the Earl and I have a bed to offer you; and you will remain here and enjoy the hunting and shooting until your leave expires, will you not?"

He shook his head.

"Not now while it is all so fresh, thank you all the same. By-and-by I will return, if you will have me. I must continue my broken visit to Sir Jasper."

"Perhaps he can't have you, lad. He has not much room, except for his horses, in that little 'box' of his. I met him yesterday, and he told me he was expecting a visitor to-day. You had better stay here, and face the position."

Captain Hamilton smiled sadly.

"Lord Carstairs, put yourself in my place, I think you would decide as I have done. If I could serve Lady Marie in any way, my own feelings should not be considered, rest assured, but there is nothing I can do for her now. If ever the time should come when you see that I can be of use to her, command me. So long as I live she will be my first thought."

"Not so, Hamilton. It is natural that you should fancy so now, but take my word for it, you will find someone else to fill her place by-and-by. Man was not meant to live alone, and I know I couldn't have done it myself. I shall be glad to hear that you are married!" said the Earl, heartily.

"Thanks; but you will never now hear that news concerning me. Men's natures are different. I do not judge others; but the world only contains one woman for me. Lacking her, I must be alone. But I have no desire to talk of myself. This visitor of Ferndale's, is he likely to prove a congenial spirit?"

"Don't know. I should think not. I should fancy he will prove doleful company. Sir Jasper told me a long story about him, but, not knowing the man, I am afraid it went in at one ear and out of the other; still I might remember a little. First and foremost, he has just lost his father, which won't make him lively if he has any feelings; secondly, he has not known his own mind about some girl, who lives in the county, and wants to see her again, which is likely to render him preoccupied. Men may speak as slightly as they please about the fair sex, but all mat-

ters connected with them hold us enthralled as no other subject does, except perhaps money. That is the god of older men. Woman is the god of the young. Ferndale does not know who the lady is, but he seemed awfully amused at it. He is one of those rare specimens who care nothing for the society of ladies. I don't think he will ever care for money either. In fact, his horses have the bulk of the article which serves him as a heart, but it must be a very spurious piece of goods I should say. I like Sir Jasper, but I think him as selfish as they are made. He and your uncle, Sir Godfrey, are exceptions to all rules; but there is this difference between them. Ferndale has been consistent through life. He has ever been a jolly, live-for-himself fellow, enjoying the good things of this world thoroughly, and believing in no one but himself. He is not changed one iota. If he asks you to his house, you may be sure it is because he thinks he will get his money's worth out of the pleasure he will receive from your company. He nearly always has visitors, for he does not like to be alone. If he pays you a visit, it is because he expects to get some fun out of it!"

"You have not a very elevated idea of Sir Jasper," laughed the Captain; "and I think your word-painting is in the main correct, still he is an agreeable enough companion."

"He is to everyone! Now your uncle is an altogether different character."

"I know so little of him I should not be a fair judge; but I should like to hear your opinion of him. It can scarcely be adverse, since he is your friend!"

"Sir Godfrey," said the Earl, thoughtfully, "was one of the most charming young men I ever met! I am fond of him more for what he was than what he is. If one of whom you were fond had smallpox, for instance, and, from being most pleasant to look upon, became unsightly, you would not change towards them, would you?"

"Most certainly not!"

"That is how I look upon my friend's faults. He did not always give way to them, even if he in reality possessed them, which I suppose he must have done. His nature was always blotted with a hand-in-hand fault. He was, even in youth, jealous and exacting. He must have cherished those evil seeds until he can scarcely bear contradiction in any form. Some people, of course, irritate him more than others. Strange to say I was always a 'scotitative,' as the old women call it, and Marie can do as she likes with him. I don't believe he ever had real affection for anyone else except Frank's mother. He cares for Frank, in a way, but he would turn him off to-morrow if he felt inclined to do so. In fact, he would do that, however much he cared for him, if he crossed his wishes. Sir Godfrey is a man of iron will—the sort of obstinate stuff the martyrs of old were made of. I could fancy him holding his own hand in the fire if he meant to burn it off!"

"Your account of him is interesting, Lord Carstairs. I have never heard so much of my uncle before. Had he ever any great trouble or disappointment in his life to cause him to change from a pleasant man into a misanthrope?"

"I never heard of any. I have, myself, put the change for the worse down to too much prosperity. Sir Godfrey Hamilton was a great man in India, and thought himself greater than he was. He received no contradiction whatever. No one contradicted him—few would have dared to do so. If I am right, this nourished his fault and strengthened it until it was too strong for him to curb, and it became himself. There! that is my analysis of Sir Godfrey's character!"

"Strange!" returned the nephew. "I fear he must have had a very miserable life!"

"He has. He has kept out of the sunshine so long that his place seems to be in the shadows."

(To be continued.)

## A LENTEN FAST.

—O—

A MANLY little boy crept wearily up the broken, worn staircase of an old house in the East-end. Up, up the tiresome way until he had reached the third story, then his footsteps grew faltering and his lips began to tremble, as he softly opened the door leading into a small, destitute room.

As the door creaked out its warning, a frail, delicate form, bending over some fancy embroidery, grew erect, a glad light brightened the hollow eyes and flushed the cheeks of the waiting mother; but one glance at her dejected boy caused the shadows to settle still deeper upon the sad, sweet face.

"Oh, mamma! don't look so; I did the best I could!" cried the boy, springing to her side and clasping his arms closely around her neck. "I just wish we could both lie down and die—it would be so much easier than to try and live! I took the beautiful cloak to the lady, and she tossed it upon a chair as if it had been a rag, and said 'this is the last week in Lent; I cannot pay you now. Call next week.' Dear mamma, I came near telling her that we were almost starving, and if we did not get the money for your work there would be no next week for us; but then I remembered how much you disliked to speak of our troubles, and I said nothing. What is Lent, mamma; and why couldn't the lady pay us now?"

"Lent is a season of fasting and prayer, my boy," replied the mother, sadly, while an accent of bitterness found expression in her low, griefed voice, as she thought of the inconsistency of life. "It would have been useless to have said more.

"Life treads on life, and heart on heart;  
We press too close in church and mart.

Heaven help me! I do not know what to do." The pain filled eyes of Mrs. Bruce grew almost wild in their expression, the slender fingers were clasped together convulsively, and she leaned heavily against her boy.

She had depended so much upon the certainty of receiving pay for her labour, and now with the postponement had vanished every hope.

She cared not for herself—she had lived beyond that—but for her proud, beautiful boy. Could she watch his cravings for bread and she powerless to supply his need? Not long; the sight would kill her.

She unclasped her hands and folded him close to her throbbing heart in pitiful silence.

At last the boy lifted his head, a thoughtful light in his earnest eyes, and said:

"Mamma, where is papa? Is he dead?"

The tortured mother started; hot tears rushed to her eyes and a blush of shame to her cheeks.

"Bertie, Heaven only knows," she said. "It is now five years since your papa left me. Do not blame him, my boy; it was my fault, not his."

"Your fault, mamma, that papa left us?" exclaimed Bertie, his eyes dilating with wonder and amazement. "And he was so good to us! We were never hungry and cold while he was with us."

"Yes, darling. I alone am to blame. I could bear it all, because I deserve it—and more; but to see my innocent boy suffer for my transgression is bitter punishment indeed.

"Do not look at me, dear, while I tell you that your mamma drove the best friend Heaven ever gave her from her side with cruel, unwomanly taunts, all because fortune had frowned upon him—because, through the rashness of his partner, his money had been swept away and his good name doubted.

"He came to me five years ago last month—it was your seventh birthday—and told me of his loss, asking me if I could begin life anew as the wife of a poor, dishonoured man.

"In my sudden surprise, in my frenzy, I told him no!—to leave my presence until he

could come to me as of old. Oh, my boy, how those cruel words have burned their way to my desolate heart!"

"At the moment when I should have comforted and cheered him, I recklessly tore from his grasp the last tie which anchored him to the old life.

"Never shall I forget his look of astonishment and despair when he tossed his purse upon the table and turned away.

"Edith," he said, 'I will take you at your word, and go. When I have rebuilt my fortune I will return. If you should need assistance before that time, call on Leonard Hill; he will aid you.'

"Oh, mamma, how could you!"

There was a world of reproach in the griefed young voice, and it cut like a sword to his mamma's heart.

"I was mad for the moment, Bertie. I thought he would return to me, but I had wounded him too deeply. I saw him no more."

Her voice choked into sobs, and with a shudder she lowered her head upon the shoulder of her boy.

"Mamma, did you ever go to Mr. Hill?" the boy questioned, after a moment's thought.

"No, my child, I could not beg; to ask aid of a stranger seemed little less to me. Oh, if Miss Weston had only paid me to-night, all would have been well! I have nothing more to pawn. Must my darling go hungry? No, it shall not be! I have my old, worn shawl. It will surely bring something."

Burning tears sprang into Bertie's dark eyes and he drew his young form up proudly.

"Mamma, I will beg before you shall part with your shawl! I will go out again. I may find someone who will want an errand run, or his horse held. Besides, I ain't the least bit hungry."

Bertie shuddered at the deception; but, although he was suffering the keenest pangs of hunger, he could not, even for the sake of truth, add his distress to the already overburdened heart of his mamma.

"Go, my child; it is our last hope," murmured Mrs. Bruce, kissing his quivering lips. "Go, and may Heaven guide your footsteps!"

The half-famished, disheartened boy went slowly down the stairs and out upon the street, forming a pitiful contrast to the rosy-cheeked boys, clad in their heavy overcoats and furs, the rich, warm blood keeping time to their bounding feet.

Bertie thought something like this as he drew his thin, worn coat closer about his throat, and left the narrow street, and entered the fashionable thoroughfare.

How torturing were his thoughts as he walked along. He must have money somehow. He knew that no food had passed his mamma's pale lips during the last twenty-four hours. Must he beg? Would no one give him honest labour to perform?

He halted before a window all ablaze with light, and glanced mechanically in at the display.

A large card attracted his attention, and he read—

"SPRING OPENING OF LEONARD HILL & Co."

Could this be the Leonard Hill of whom his papa had spoken as one that would render them assistance if needed?

His little gloveless fingers grew colder, and his feet had become almost numb while he had been standing so quietly, striving to solve the greatest problem of life—a problem under which sturdy, strong men had fallen defeated and dismayed—How could life be honestly sustained under extreme adverse circumstances?

He wondered how he could find Mr. Hill if he should enter the great shop. Several men had passed in and out, but their faces were stern and haughty, with hard, selfish lines upon their brow, and a cold, worldly glitter in their eyes.

No, he argued with himself, that could not be the kind of material his papa's friend was

made of. He could not imagine how one of them would look doing a deed of kindness.

Ah! at last his eyes light up earnestly, and his pulses quicken. He sees a portly figure coming out at the door, his face full of heart sunshine, and his eyes beaming with joyful content, as one well satisfied with the world and himself.

Bertie thought there could be no mistake this time, and he started after the gentleman. In a few moments he had reached his side, and laying his hand upon his arm, he looked eagerly up, and said,—

"Sir, is your name Leonard Hill?"

The gentleman halted, and looked down upon the uplifted questioning face of the boy.

"Why, bless my soul!" he exclaimed, good-naturedly, "suppose I say yes? You don't hold my note for a half million, do you?"

"Please, sir, don't make fun of me; but you looked so good-natured and happy that I made sure that was your name," replied Bertie, with downcast eyes.

"Now, look here, my boy, none of that!" said the gentleman, blowing his nose vigorously, to hide his emotion. "Don't you try to flatter an old man like me. Leonard Hill is my name. Now what can I do for you?"

Bertie was silent a moment. How could he tell the stranger that they were without food? Yes, mamma was right. To ask aid of a stranger was very much like begging. How his sensitive heart revolted at the task.

The gentleman placed his hand under the boy's chin, and raised his flushed face to the light.

"What is it, my boy?" he said, kindly. "Can I aid you in any way? Do not fear to speak."

"Oh, sir, if it wasn't for mamma I would die first!" the boy exclaimed, passionately. "But everything has gone wrong with us, and she has nothing to eat. Don't think I am a beggar, sir, but papa said if we ever needed help to ask Leonard Hill."

The gentleman noticed how pinched the brave face was, and how in speaking of their hunger he spoke of his mamma without a mention of self, and he muttered to himself, "Brave little fellow," then said aloud:

"Just so, my little man. Of course I will help you. What is your name?"

"Herbert Bruce, sir."

"What?"

He almost crushed the boy's arm in his unconscious grasp, and Bertie was so frightened that he would certainly have run away had it been possible.

"What did you say, boy? What is your father's name?"

"I am not quite sure about papa's name," said the child, "but in mamma's bible it says, 'Presented by Henry Bruce to his wife,' and I think it means papa."

"Of course it does, child, of course it does! I guess you don't need much assistance, only to find your father," chuckled the old gentleman.

"Find papa! Oh, sir, do you know where he is?"

"Why, certainly, certainly! Take you right to him in twenty minutes."

"Oh, mamma, I—"

Bertie staggered forward. The air seemed filled with diamond dust; the form of the gentleman receded from his sight, and he fell forward upon the pavement.

"Well, I declare! Here! somebody, everybody help me lift this boy. Old simpleton that I am! Might have known better than to tell him all at once. I never could break any news gently."

Ready hands assisted the blustering old gentleman to carry Bertie into a chemist's shop, and after a restorative had been administered the dark eyes were opened a moment, but famished, defrauded nature could not rally her enfeebled army into activity, and the boy sunk again into a stupor like unto death.

"Fetch some food!" cried the excited



gentleman. "This boy hasn't had anything to eat for—Heaven knows how long! No wonder he fainted. Some wine, quick! Ah! he moves again."

Bertie had made no mistake when he stopped Leonard Hill because he thought him a good man. He was noble, whole-souled, and impulsive, and the boy could not have fallen into better hands, nor could the touch of a woman have been more tender than his as he dipped pieces of bread into the wine and fed the half-starved boy.

After awhile, when Bertie could stand upon his feet again, Mr. Hill called a cab, and as they drove along he told the bewildered boy how his father had been searching and advertising for his wife and child for years, but could hear nothing concerning them.

In a few moments they had arrived at Mr. Bruce's lodgings, and, after a little explanation, Bertie was clasped close in his papa's arms.

"Bertie, my boy, take me to your mamma," he said, after the first greeting was over. "I have wronged her so, I would ask her forgiveness."

"No, papa; mamma was talking of you this evening, and she said 'that it was all her fault,' so I know she has nothing to forgive. But, papa, it is a sad home I'll take you to. We have had nothing in the house to eat all day."

"Heaven forgive me! My wife and child starving while I have plenty!" exclaimed Mr. Bruce, bitterly. "Come, Bertie, let us tarry no longer. We will stop on the way and get something. Will you go with us, Hill?"

"Why, bless your soul, no!" ejaculated the old gentleman. "I have made such a baby of myself now that I am heartily ashamed. Success to you. Your wife will forgive you, never fear, if she is anything like this noble little fellow."

Once more the old stairs echo back Bertie's footsteps, but now they are bounding as those of a young roe. He had left his papa just outside of the door, and, with a well-filled basket on his arm, hastened into the room to prepare his mamma for the glad surprise.

"Mamma, mamma, see! Warm rolls, fresh butter—everything—and wine!" he cried, springing to her side, hiding his flushed, glad face on her shoulder.

"Oh, my darling boy! Heaven surely heard my prayers. Where did you get such a feast?"

"It's all right, mamma; eat quick. I am sure you are almost starved."

"And my boy?"

"No, mamma, I have eaten; don't wait on me. I met the kindest, best man in the world, and he gave me all this. I tell you I feel rich to-night. You did not have any Christmas gift, mamma, and although Christmas has come and gone, I am going to make you a present. What will you have?"

While Bertie had been talking he had been dancing around the room like a wild boy. His mamma had looked on first with wonder, then a joyful thought suggested itself, and a half-painful thrill crept over her soul—a doubting, craving fear, a possible joy, but a more probable disappointment.

"Bertie, I—oh, my boy, what makes your eyes sparkle so? Have you—Bertie, tell me, quick! This waiting will kill me!" she gasped, reaching out towards her boy.

"Oh, mamma, I am afraid the telling will kill you with joy. It almost did me!"

The boy's young face grew serious, and he put his arms around the slender form of his mamma and drew her close to his side.

"Now, mamma, shut your eyes, and wish for what you want most in the world."

"Bertie, it is your papa!"

A sudden rush of feet, a cry of delight from her son, and Mrs. Bruce was clasped close to her husband's heart.

"Oh, Harry, forgive!" she sobbed, while her husband could only press her closer and repeat over and over,—

"My darling wife! My precious boy!"

All was explained and forgiven; and although Henry Bruce was far from being a rich man, yet he had a strong arm and a reason brightened and tempered by the chastening fire of Heaven's furnace, and with glad hearts they gathered up the broken chain of their life and began anew to live for each other and for eternity.

"Edith," the husband said, upon the first evening in their new home, "how strangely we were united after all the years of sorrow!"

A merry twinkle came to the eyes of Bertie, and he responded, quickly,—

"You see, papa, it happened during Lent, and mamma and I had been fasting faithfully and she had been praying, so I don't see anything strange about our finding you."

Tears drowned the laughter in Bertie's eyes, and the bit of irony that he had begun so bravely ended in a sob of joy.

"It was the pleasure of Heaven, that much we know," murmured Edith, reverentially.

## A CRUEL SILENCE.

—O—

### CHAPTER XI.

THERE have been unhappy marriages ever since the world began, and such will probably be found among us to the close. Which of us could not cite among our own acquaintance a case where what should be the holiest, closest of all relationship, has become a bitter bondage? But, still, few could mention a marriage as desperately miserable as poor Lord Keith's, while the most rigid believer in the old adage of "faults on both sides" would have been puzzled to point out in what particular Harold was to be condemned.

Had Augusta Clements been a young girl innocent as himself of all knowledge of the Scotch marriage law he would have felt differently. While he believed her a fellow-victim he honestly meant to do his best for her.

But, alas! the whole fraud was too palpable. Her mother and uncle showed themselves in their true colours. The picnic, the losing their way, and getting separated from the rest of the party, were all part of a deep-laid scheme to secure a husband, and, what was coveted more, a provision for Augusta.

That was not the worst of it. She had been in love with another man—a member of the troop of strolling players—and had cast him aside like a worn-out glove when he was attacked by an incurable disease.

Heartless, mercenary and deceitful, Harold saw her in her true colours, and he made up his mind, though the law might call her his wife, he would never willingly see her again.

Augusta gained two hundred a-year, and if her husband's aversion to her was too plain to be flattering no doubt money healed the smart.

She was quite content, apparently, with her share of the compact; and from the day they parted in Scotland Harold had never seen her, had never heard from her, while only the fact of Mr. Duncan's quarterly payments reminded him of her existence.

Not that he ever forgot it. The blight his folly had cast on his life was ever present with him. His misery increased a hundred-fold when his brother's death made him the heir of Rosemoor. It was well-nigh torture to him to hear his father talk of his future, and entreat him to marry.

And now the three years of misery might be nearly over. Now it seemed probable the woman who had cursed his life was dying, and that he should be free!

Harold's was a generous nature, kind and true, and yet he could not bring himself to sorrow for the creature who might be dying! He tried hard to feel one genuine regret, one

real spark of pity, but it was beyond him. He did not triumph at the thought of her death, he did not exult at it, but he could not help a deep thankfulness that at last he should be free!

He tried hard to remember one good trait in the woman he had been lured into marrying and he failed. She was neither clever, refined, or good tempered. She had forsaken the man she loved, and had wilfully set herself to entrap another who cared nothing for her. She had been an unkind sister, and an unruly daughter. Try as he would he could find no good qualities in Augusta. Besides, the younger sister, without half her abilities, had been of a far better nature.

He took a cab at the Bournemouth station, and ordered the man to drive to North-terrace. It proved a long narrow street in one of the least fashionable parts of the town.

He dismissed the man at the corner and walked on, examining the numbers carefully, and feeling a strange reluctance, now he was so near his wife, to the thought of meeting her.

He never quite forgot that morning. It was so fine and sunny that the narrow, sordid street seemed to look more dreary and poverty-stricken by the contrast to the bright blue sky.

A crowd of street boys and servant-maids had gathered opposite one of the houses, before which a plain, unfeathered hearse stood waiting.

The funeral started before Harold reached the house—just one shabby mourning coach besides the hearse.

It came on Lord Keith with a sudden shock that the lowered blinds and the shuttered windows belonged to ninety-nine—the very number on the slip of paper Mrs. Gresham had given him. What did it mean?

He would not give himself time to think. Ascending the steep flight of steps quickly, he astonished the dirty maid-of-all-work, who had been staring after the funeral procession, and had been just going to slam the door and go back to her pots and pans.

"Is Mrs. Clements lodging here?"

The girl stared at him.

"Yes," she said, stolidly; "but you can't see her."

"I think she will see me if you take her my name. I am Mr. Harold, and—"

The girl interrupted him by a shriek.

"You can't be the poor young lady's husband what Mrs. Clements sent for time after time? Well, you've just come too late, sir, if you are. That's your wife's funeral!" and she pointed with one dirty finger to the receding hearse.

Harold Keith understood. His mother-in-law had proclaimed her child's wrongs, and held him up to general execration whenever she could get an audience.

He was not angry with the dirty little servant. He did not even trouble to set her right.

"Do you mean that Mrs. Harold is dead?" he asked, gently. "Is that her funeral?"

"She died nearly a week ago," replied the small maid. "Missus is in an awful way, for it'll give the lodgings a bad name, she's afraid. Mrs. Clements hadn't been here a fortnight!"

"Was it a sudden illness?"

"I can't say that," said the child-servant, precociously. "She coughed a lot, and she was very thin; but, then, most people who come here for the winter do cough. We never thought there was much the matter. She went out like the snuff of a candle at last!"

"I should like to see Mrs. Clements. I suppose I can wait in her sitting room? She is sure to come back here after the funeral."

"No, thank you!" said the girl, as he offered her half-a-crown. "I don't want your money, sir, after the way you treated her! Mrs. Clements'll be back by three o'clock; and if you want to see her you had better call again."

She was going to shut the door in his face,

but he stopped her by asking what doctor had attended Mrs. Harold, and if she could tell him where he lived.

"Dr. Green. It's just round the corner."

Lord Keith found a very humble six-roomed house with a large brass plate looking too big for the gate inscribed, "James Green, Surgeon."

He was a little mystified. He knew Mrs. Clements had something of her own besides the allowance he paid to Augusta. Then there was the rent for Woodbine Cottage.

There could have been no reason for the mother and daughter to choose such very shabby lodgings, or to select such a fifth-rate practitioner as Mr. Green.

But he formed a more favourable opinion of the surgeon when he had seen him—a young man, and poor, but a gentleman to the backbone.

He had probably started humbly, because he had no money to buy a practice, and did not care to be anyone's assistant.

Somehow, the very sight of him satisfied Lord Keith that Augusta had at least had every care.

The miserable lodgings and the dirty servant had troubled him. He felt certain, from Mr. Green's face, of a patient of his had not had a fair amount of attention, he would have known the reason why.

"Mrs. Harold," repeated the young surgeon, when Keith had introduced the subject of his visit. "Yes. I was called in to her two weeks ago. It was a very simple case of decline. Nothing in the world could have saved her. The best of nursing, and the grandest physicians, could not have helped her!"

"You are sure?" Harold spoke impulsively. "She was my wife. I never saw her after our wedding day. I can't explain things to you; it was a miserable business altogether. I allowed her two hundred a year; but since I have seen the place she died in I have been tormented with the fear she may have found it insufficient."

"She had every comfort," replied the surgeon, positively; "and her mother nursed her devotedly. I don't like Mrs. Clements. She jarred on me, if I am to speak plainly; but I must confess she did her utmost for Mrs. Harold."

"The servant declares I was sent for, but I cannot believe it."

"At first I believed my patient was a widow. When I heard to the contrary, I suggested your being sent for; but Mrs. Clements refused. She said you could not meet without great agitation. I made out the certificate, giving consumption as the cause of death. The funeral was to-day."

"I know, Mr. Green, I feel almost as though I had murdered her! I never injured her, but she stood between me and happiness; and—"

"And you regret her death, perhaps, because at times you have been tempted to wish for it. I understand. But I don't think you need. I should say she had had a very happy life. She always seemed cheerful and content. She looked wonderfully young for her age!"

"She always did!"

The surgeon hesitated. He had guessed the outline of the story, and felt a deep pity for Mr. Harold.

"I can only tell you your wife had every possible comfort," he said, kindly. "North-terrace may seem to you a very humble abode, but the landlady is civil and obliging. If Mrs. Harold had had the finest lodging in Bournemouth, and a physician from London, the result must have been the same."

"I am very much obliged to you!" and he wrung the young doctor's hand cordially.

Back again to North-terrace. Mrs. Clements was in now, and would receive him. He was ushered into a parlour furnished with very frippery horse-hair chairs, down whose backs gracefully alided coarse crocheted antimacassars. A tall, angular woman of depressed

appearance, evidently the landlady, sat opposite the widow.

Mrs. Clements bowed grimly. Harold Keith wondered if she was thinking of the last time they met in the inn parlour of that remote Scotch village.

"I'm glad you have had the decency to come at last," she said, severely. "I'm sure it's time; and as a lone, lorn woman, stricken down with grief, is not able to cope with you, I've asked my friend Mrs. Wilson to be here as witness."

Keith bowed gravely.

"I never received any intimation of your daughter's illness till yesterday!" he said, quietly.

"She wrote herself a good ten days ago," said Mrs. Clements, snappishly.

"I only received her letter yesterday. I went to Camberwell and found you were away. I came to Bournemouth this morning, and drove straight here!"

"I'm sure the young man can't say more," observed the landlady, feelingly. "And you know yourself, Mrs. Clements, the poor lamb went off suddenly at the last!"

Mrs. Clements began a long speech, which, shorn of its complaints and abuse, seemed to be a lament after the income which died with Augusta, and a strong hint that her husband should undertake the expenses of the illness and funeral, besides making some provision for her mother.

Harold hesitated. Two hundred a year ought, he thought, to have been sufficient. Although a nobleman he was not rich, and Mrs. Clements might live thirty years, so that to undertake to allow her an annuity was no light matter.

"You'll never fret after her," said his mother-in-law scornfully. "You haven't even put on a hatband. You'll marry again before the grass is green on her grave, poor lamb, and leave her mother to starve. But you're my son-in-law, whoever you marry; and if you don't want your wife to hear of my darling's wrongs you had better come to terms!"

"It stands to reason, sir," put in Mrs. Wilson, "if you should ever take a second lady she wouldn't like to hear of how you treated your first wife and her family. I always say it's better to part friends, and let bygones be bygones."

The whole scene jarred on Lord Keith unspeakably, but he knew enough of Ivy's gentle nature to feel that if Mrs. Clements went to her with her own version of Augusta's story, his love would suffer keenly. He desired nothing better than to wipe a sponge over this wretched episode; and so, hiding his disgust, he asked Mrs. Clements plainly how much money she expected; and the widow had evidently studied the subject, for she answered at once a hundred pounds down for "expenses," and the same sum yearly.

"I don't carry so much about with me," said Lord Keith, "but I will telegraph to my lawyer, and he will send me the amount to-morrow. Remember, I do not admit that you have the slightest claim on me, but I would rather we parted in peace."

"A handsome man," said Mrs. Wilson, when she had watched Lord Keith half down the street. "What might he be, ma'am? Not in trade, surely?"

"He's a nobleman."

"But you called him, Mr. Harold!"

"He kept his real name a secret from us, and I don't choose him to know I've found it out. I hate that man, Mrs. Wilson. I'd rather he abused me than talked in that smooth, cold way of his, as though I was just dirt under his feet! I've known him hard on four years now, and I made up my mind long ago I'd like to bring his pride down a peg or two, and I rather think I shall!"

## CHAPTER XII.

GENERALLY rich men find more relations than they need. Most wealthy bachelors,

in particular, could very easily dispense with a few of their kindred; but Abraham Newton was, perhaps, the exception that proves the rule, for he really was nearly alone in the world.

He had been the son of a foundling, which, perhaps, goes far to explain his position. His father had, at a very early stage of his existence, been deposited on the doorstep of a certain rich old lady, who forthwith adopted him, but died before he was launched in life; and, forgetting to make her will, left her protégé utterly unprovided for.

There must have been a good deal of "luck" in Tom Newton's lot, for he got a clerkship in the local bank, and worked his way steadily upwards till he was allowed to marry the only child of the village rector, a union which was blessed with twin boys, Abraham and John.

Abraham got an appointment in India, and went out while still in his teens. John stayed at home, went into the bank, where his father had served so long, and in his turn married, and had one daughter, a girl, who grew up in the almost unique position of having neither brother, sister, cousin, or aunt.

Poor Katharine! She was an orphan and alone in the world when James Martin fell in love with her.

Some prudent friend suggested she ought to write and inform her rich uncle in India of her marriage, and being a docile, gentle creature, she obeyed; this letter being the very last tidings Abraham had of her.

Abraham never married. Whether he was so busy making money he had no time to think of a wife, or whether he fixed his affections on some one unattainable, he never said; but no woman's name was ever linked with his.

He went on getting richer and richer until a sudden illness made him remember he was growing old, and that as he already had more money than he knew how to spend he might as well retire and pass the rest of his days in his native land.

Poor old man! He was sixty-five, and he had been abroad nearly half a century. He had not a single relation in the world except the little girl who had written long ago to tell him of her marriage.

Well, probably, she had a dozen sons and daughters by this time, so the day after he landed down he went to Chepstow to find them out, and act the part of benevolent genii to the whole family.

His amiable anticipations were disappointed. He saw the certificate of Katharine's marriage. He found plenty of people who could remember her and her fine young husband; but all told him the same story.

Three months after the wedding, without a word of explanation to anyone, James Martin sold off his scanty furniture, and took his young wife to London. They had never been seen or heard of in Chepstow since.

Mr. Newton pondered on the story a good while, and finally consulted a lawyer.

Here was he—he told the solicitor—with forty thousand a year from property securely invested in the funds. He was too old to marry. He had not a single intimate friend. He meant to leave every penny of his fortune to his niece, Katharine, the only one of his kindred remaining—failing her to her children. How was he to set about finding them?

The lawyer was a clever man, and an honest one. He drew up the advertisement, which had caused such a difference of opinion between Ivy's two aunts, but he told Mr. Newton it would be a most difficult task to discriminate between the people who claimed to be Katharine Martin's children.

His worthy client had never seen his niece or her husband. It was more than twenty-one years since they left Chepstow, so that they could hardly be identified if taken down to their native town. With such a property at stake there would be, at least, a score or so of claimants.

Mr. Abraham Newton listened submissively. "I don't know much about girls," he said,



rather helplessly. "John used to write that his Kate was a pretty little creature, but with a temper of her own. I don't object to that. I rather like a dash of spirit in a young thing!"

Mr. Metcalf smiled.

"My dear sir, if Mrs. Martin wrote to you two-and-twenty years ago to announce her marriage, I don't think you can expect to find her a 'young thing'!"

Abraham stared. It was evident he had forgotten the flight of time, and was still thinking of his niece as a young girl.

"Well," he said, slowly, "I never thought it would be so difficult to find her. Here's a fortune going begging, so to say, and the only creature who's got a right to it can't be produced!"

"Have a little patience, sir," said Mr. Metcalf, cheerfully. "I think the advertisement must produce something."

But after it had been inserted day after day for a whole month the lawyer began to feel doubtful. Not one single answer had come so far. Of course the Martins might have emigrated, which would explain their own delay in replying to it. But surely someone in the old country must know their abode?

Mr. Newton grew impatient, and appeared as often in Chambers-lane that his legal adviser really crossed the sight of the tall, browned Anglo-Indian, with his never-failing question "What news?"

They sat together one September morning discussing the case. If Mr. Metcalf charged six-and-eightpence every time Abraham came to his office the old Nabob was a gold mine to him.

Even the lawyer admitted it began to look serious, and was inclined to proceed on the only other clue they had to guide them.

When young Mrs. Martin left Chesham it seemed probable she would present her husband with an addition to the family.

How would it answer to insert an advertisement specially appealing to parish clerks for the registry of the baptism of the child? The objections, of course, were numerous. The little life might never have seen the light, or its parents might have neglected to make a Christian of it. Taken altogether, the chances of finding the Nabob's heiress were rather faint, when the senior clerk interrupted the *châ-telle* with a most startling communication.

"There's a lady here, sir, asking for Mr. Newton's address. I did not tell her he was with you now, but I thought you might like to see her. She says she's come about the advertisement."

"Katharine herself!" said the Nabob, enthusiastically. "Prodigions!"

"My dear sir," remonstrated Mr. Metcalf, "you mustn't take her identity for granted. Leave her to prove that. What name does she give, Hawkins?" (to his clerk). "And is she a lady?"

"Yes, sir," returned the official, gravely. "But I should think she'd lived in some outlandish place. She says her name's Martin."

Ivy's elder aunt was admitted, and Mr. Metcalf owned the accuracy of his clerk's description.

She was a gentlewoman, but she seemed terribly antiquated. It was as though she had not changed the fashion of her dress for thirty years. A bright blue gossamer veil to screen her eyes from the glare of the sun gave her an uncanny look.

She raised this on being seated, looked from one to the other of the two men, and asked abruptly—

"Which is Abraham Newton?"

"I am," returned the Nabob, rather taken aback. "May I ask, madam—"

She interrupted him sharply.

"No, you mayn't. I prefer to state my own business in my own way. The James Martin in your advertisement was my only brother. He and his wife sailed for Sydney in 1866, and the ship went down, with all on board. If you doubt my words you can go to the owners, and ask them if they didn't lose a vessel called the *Palermo* in the August of that

year. I don't know much about such things, but I should think they'd kept some list of the passengers. If so, you'll be able to read the names for yourself."

Abraham Newton looked troubled.

"Dead!" he said, huskily. "Poor little Katy dead! And this is the end of all I hoped to do for her!"

Miss Martin drew herself up.

"I parted tenderly with my brother and his wife, though I never approved of their leaving England. I think they should just have stayed and fought things out. You can live down anything in time; but they thought differently, so I let them have their own way. They left the baby with me, for even Katharine had sense enough to know it'd be a dreadful hindrance in her way, roughing it in the new country."

"The baby—then there was a baby?"

"Of course there was. Babies always come to poor people. Jim had lost every penny of his savings, and thrown up a good situation for what proved a delusion. He was almost starving, and his wife worn just to a shadow, trying to keep their bit of a home together. So, of course, as they hadn't strength for two they must needs make the two three."

Mr. Newton looked relieved.

"Then there'll be someone to benefit by my money after all! By your leave, ma'am, I'll adopt the baby left on your hands."

"You're welcome," said Aunt Marion, gravely; "but she's not a baby now. She's turned one-and-twenty. My sister and I have done the best we could for her; but, you see, her father disgraced us by his poverty and folly, and this girl has been a burden to us all her days. I don't hold with poor people having children, and rejecting them on their relations!"

Both the men felt a deep pity for the orphan girl who had lived under this grim spinster's rule.

Surely it was a sad enough story, to lose both father and mother in her infancy; but to be brought up by Miss Martin was a harder fate.

"She shall never cost you another penny!" cried the Nabob. "I'll adopt her this very day!"

"You'll do nothing of the sort," said Aunt Marion. "To begin with, I am an utter stranger to you. You've no reason to trust my word. I've brought the certificate of Ivy's birth and her parents' marriage, and the account of the foundering of the *Palermo*. I cut it out of the paper at the time, thinking some day it might be wanted."

"I suppose Ivy knows her parents' story?"

"No," said Miss Martin, stoically. "If I had told her they were drowned at sea she would always have been fancying some of the passengers were saved, and her parents among them. She is idle enough now, but if she'd taken to dreaming of their coming back some day to claim her she'd have been unbearable!"

"Poor child!"

"You need not pity her. She has had a decent shelter, and plenty of good plain food. She has been respectably educated, and knows her Church Catechism. She has been a terrible burden to us, but we have done our duty by her!"

"And she knows at least that she is an orphan?"

"She knows that she lost both parents in one day. I have never encouraged her to ask questions. Ivy is a girl who requires a great deal of keeping down."

The lawyer felt sure she got it.

"And when can I see her?" demanded the rich Anglo-Indian, who had not a single relation in the world except the poor little orphan.

"When you have made inquiries into the truth of my statement and are satisfied I will send for her. We are staying at present in apartments at Camden Town. I left Ivy behind in the country, both for economy, and because a friend of ours wished it."

The old maid was not without her pride. It gave her a kind of vicarious triumph to recol-

lect that she had a niece visiting "titled people," as she would have phrased it.

"I hope the friend is kind to her, poor child?"

"Lady Tregarthan is only too indulgent. I expect I shall find Ivy utterly spoiled after spending three months in such luxury!"

"Lady Tregarthan!" said the old man, who knew Sir Edward by name as ex-Secretary for India. "Is she acting as the little maid's hostess?"

"We have rented a cottage from Sir Edward for a great many years, so that when his wife invited Ivy to spend three months with her we could hardly refuse."

Mr. Newton declared he would make the inquiries Miss Martin persisted in that very day, and to himself the honour of calling on her the next morning.

Abraham looked at his legal adviser when the lady had departed. Very sharp and shrewd in business matters, he had a kind of suspicion that in private life he was easily taken in, and that Mr. Metcalf thought so. There was something almost comic in the appealing glance he cast at that gentleman.

"I know you think I'm an idiot," he said, plaintively; "but I'm sure it sounds as clear as possible, and the sooner I get that poor child out of Miss Martin's clutches the better!"

"She is an alarming lady."

The Nabob shrugged his shoulders.

"If her brother resembled her I should say my poor Katy had a bad time of it. Then you do believe her story?" this last after a pause.

"I believe she is James Martin's eldest daughter, and I suppose she would have no objection in deceiving you; but why in the world didn't she answer the advertisement sooner?"

The real reason—though Abraham Newton was not likely to discover it—was the bitter opposition of her sister.

The two old maids had clung together in everything. They had shared each other's opinions so long that many people alleged they had only one mind between them; but the subject of Ivy had, unknown to the outer world always been the one jarring element.

Miss Marion actively disliked her, and, not content with making her feel her dependent position, loved to cross her wishes in the smallest trifles.

Laura had a far gentler heart. The main fact, that Ivy was a burden and a trouble to them, she admitted. She would always have kept this truth in view, but if left to herself she would have tried to make the girl as happy as she could be in spite of it.

But for Marion's failing sight, and real anxiety about her eyes, giving Laura, for a time the upper hand, Ivy would never have been suffered to go to the Tregarthans. Now that the elder sister was perfectly recovered her stronger will asserted itself.

The two had almost endless discussions before Mr. Newton's advertisement was answered, but in the end Marion conquered.

Laura was deeply troubled over it. She offered out of her own share of their income to defray Ivy's expenses at a training school for governesses.

She offered to "sell out" sufficient of her property to start the girl in life at such a distance that she need never cross their path again.

In the end she implored her sister on her knees to let things be as they were, and take no notice of the alluring advertisement.

"I tell you I have made inquiries at Chesham," said Marion, irascibly. "He has been down there asking about Katharine. There is no doubt in the world that he is her uncle. Why, don't you remember she had an uncle in India, whom she used to dream would come home rich and set them up for life? Of course, this is the man!"

A mist came before Laura's eyes as she recollected her pretty girlish sister-in-law, and the great hopes she had founded on the home-coming of her stranger uncle.

"I remember perfectly," answered Laura, "and I don't doubt this is the man."



["WILL YOU TRUST ME TO TAKE CARE OF YOU, MY DEAR?" MR. NEWTON ASKED, KINDLY.]

"Well?"

"You ought not to do it, Marion!" said Laura, bravely. "I am certain harm will come of it!"

"Abraham Newton is rich, and we are poor," returned her sister. "The burden of the girl presses heavily on us. He is so rich she will be only a plaything to him. You need not look at me like that, Laura. I hope I speak the truth. I shall not tell Mr. Newton one syllable that is false. I shall insist on his verifying the fact for himself before I let him spend a sixpence on Ivy."

"But you will be deceiving him!" pleaded Laura. "Oh, Marion, haven't we suffered enough through other people's treachery to make us shun such ways?"

"I don't know what you are talking about," said Miss Martin, severely. "Did you or did you not promise me solemnly at Ivy's birth that you would never mention her parentage to herself or any one we might become acquainted with?"

"I did, and I have kept my word these twenty years; but oh, Marion, it has been a cruel silence!"

"A sensible one, I call it!" corrected Marion. "If I tell Mr. Newton James sailed with his wife for Sydney, leaving his infant child in our care, and that he and his wife were drowned when the steamer went down with all on board, am I speaking what is false?"

"No. But—"

"I don't want your 'buts,'" returned the sister. "All these years we have been saddled with the girl, and now there comes a chance of getting rid of her I mean to take it," and putting on her bonnet and shawl she set out for Chancery-lane.

Mr. Newton returned her call the next day, and assured her he was perfectly satisfied with the results of his inquiries. He was ready at once to receive Katharine's child, and provide for her as his own. Then, as the shabby poverty of her lodgings struck him, he begged

that he might be allowed to offer some recompense for the trouble and expense the little girl must have been to the ladies all these years.

"No, sir," cried Miss Laura, speaking very fast, indeed, as though she feared her visitor would interrupt her. "We want nothing from you. I don't approve of the steps Marion has taken. I look on Ivy as our appointed burden, and I don't think we ought to have tried to pass it on to your shoulders. I don't say I'm fond of the girl. She's too frivolous; but I don't hold with her leaving us, and I never shall."

"You will excuse my sister," said Marion, as Laura flounced out of the room. "She feels this very much. She was the one to take Ivy from her mother's arms, and she promised we would never desert the girl; but to let her leave us for a luxurious home is not deserting her!"

"No, indeed. I am living in a furnished house at Sydenham for the present. I hope you will let me take Ivy there at once!"

"You shall take her there to-morrow, if you like. I expect her home early in the afternoon."

They had barely had time to break the news to Ivy the day of her return when Mr. Newton was announced.

One look into his face, and the girl knew here was one who would treat her kindly. It did not need the fatherly kiss on her forehead, the affectionate greeting, to tell her that her new guardian would be very different from her aunts, and yet Miss Laura's words had made a strange impression on Ivy.

The girl felt a dim instinct that trouble would come of the step before her. Her aunts had never given her a particle of love, but yet she had always felt she belonged to them.

She did not feel as though she had the slightest claim on this old gentleman who took her hand and asked her to try and care for him a little, just for her mother's sake.

"Ivy's things are not unpacked," said Miss Martin, practically. "I thought they had

better remain as they were, then she would be ready to accompany you at once."

"Are you willing, my dear?" he asked her, kindly. "Will you trust me to take care of you?"

"You are very good," she said, gently; "but you know I am not a child now. I can work for my own living; and, please, I would rather not live on charity any longer."

The old man's heart ached for her. Full well he guessed how bitter the bread of dependence had been made to her.

"You must never think my care for you charity, my dear!" he said, gravely. "Your grandfather was my twin-brother. I never married myself, and I always meant what money I made to go to his child. I have come home too late to help your mother, Ivy; but it will be a bitter disappointment to me if her daughter refuses to share my home."

Ivy looked up at him, with a strange bewilderment in her violet eyes.

"Do you know that I am always in the way?" she asked, gravely. "That even my aunts, who have had the care of me always, think me a trouble and a burden?"

"I'll risk that," said Abraham, stoutly. "Maybe, my dear, you'll find one uncle easier to please than a couple of aunts. Now, say good-bye to the ladies, and we'll be off."

The luggage had already been placed on the waiting fly. She shook hands timidly with the two old maids, who offered no warmer adieu; and then with a strange, wistful glance at them, as though pleading for one word of kindness she went downstairs, clinging to the old man's arm.

The two gaunt, hard-featured women were left alone.

"I have kept my word," said Laura, solemnly, "but it is against my conscience."

"Nonsense! We have never said a syllable that was not true."

"No, but we kept silence. Marion, I don't often go against you, but I seem to know harm will come of this cruel silence."

(To be continued.)





["GOOD-BYE FOR EVER, GOOD-BYE!" SANG MARIAN AT THE PIANO.]

## NOVELETTE.]

## MOTHER OR DAUGHTER?

-30-

## CHAPTER I.

"On a hill there grows a flower,  
Fair befall the dainty sweet;  
By that flower there is a bower  
Where the heavenly muses meet.

In that bower there is a chair  
Fringed all about with gold,  
Where doth sit the fairest fair  
That ever eye did yet behold.

Who would not that face admire?  
Who would not this saint adore?  
Who would not this sight desire,  
Though he thought to see no more?"

THE sun was shining with extraordinary brilliance, and seemed to have set everything in motion—that is, everything in the shape of bird or insect that is blessed with wings and a multiplicity of legs. There was a hum and a buzz on the warm air; white butterflies were flying by, and blue ones with a silvery edge to their wings, and red ones, and sulphur-coloured ones, and some that had spots on their gauzy pinions, for Nature is fond of spot-markings.

Overhead in the pine boughs the wasps were at work, and the bees were swarming in the rose and lily chalice, seeking ardently for that sweet liquid which they wished to transform into honey, while their bumble brethren went sailing to and fro amongst the bushes and blossoms in a stately, leisurely fashion. A brace of swallows went winging by, and a small army of rooks, that darkened the clear, blue sky for a while. A willow wren was singing in the top of a fir tree, warbling softly, yet very sweetly, though it was but like the dying echo of his lusty spring song. A small,

yet extremely perky-looking sparrow perched himself on a laurel branch, and danced and hopped *vis-à-vis* to his mate and chosen one.

A variety of midges and gnats swarmed in the air, and made a faint, faraway buzzing, while all manner of beetles and green-coated insects crept about the short, velvety turf, enamelled gaily with buttercups and pink-frilled daisy. A green and black ladybird crept over a tea-rose, as though meditating establishing her Lares and Penates in its sweet-smelling heart. The curled frond of a fern peeped up here and there, its pale colour showing distinctly against its more mature brethren. Beyond the river flashed like burnished silver in the sun's hot rays, and the hills behind Redbrook looked absolutely fiery in the sun-god's blaze, while the leafage of the trees that crowned them looked positively refreshing in contrast, and pleasant for the eye to rest on and study; only Mrs. Daventry was not studying them, nor any of the other sweet sights that nature unfolded to her careless and ungrateful gaze.

As she sat in her bloomy bower, that was such a pleasant, cool retreat on that hot June day, she was not studying the hills nor admiring the gaudy butterflies, nor listening to the willow wren's dieaway little song, nor heeding the bumble bees and their more useful brethren. She was simply staring straight before her at her daughter, who, seated on the lawn in the full blaze of the pitiless sun, with only a little silk cap perched on her untidy tresses, was sketching the house, and occasionally addressing terms of endearment to a brown-and-white spaniel, who lay panting with protruding tongue at her feet.

Marian Daventry at the best of times was not a beauty, and no one could possibly have said she was without breaking the ninth commandment, and "bearing false witness," but sometimes she looked fairly well, when carefully and becomingly dressed. On the present occasion, in a crumpled blue linen gown, with dishevelled locks, and freckled

and sun-reddened face, a man's little cap surmounting it all, she looked downright ugly. No other term could be applied to her, and her mother sighed as she regarded her.

She, Mrs. Daventry, had been, indeed was, a beauty, for she had only arrived at the not very mature age of thirty-four, and time had dealt leniently with her. Her skin was as fresh and clear as it had been that day, eighteen years ago, when Lieutenant Arthur Daventry, of Her Majesty's ship *Calliste*, had asked her to be his wife. Her eyes were as bright, her figure as graceful and lithe, her hair of the same bright corn-colour.

She had lost nothing of her attractions, rather had she gained, for the contour of both figure and face was rounder and more perfect. And yet, notwithstanding all her beauty, she was the mother of as ugly and awkward a girl as one would be likely to meet with in a day's march; and still there was a strong resemblance between mother and daughter—that queer, comical resemblance that often exists between a very pretty and a very plain person.

Marian's blunt features were a coarse replica of her mother's; her hair was the same colour, only several shades lighter, and lacked the burnish and gloss that was so beautiful on Josephine's. Her eyebrows were also black, but thick, not beautifully pencilled; while her eyes were green—some people called them hazel for courtesy, but they were undeniably green—and though the same shape and size, and set like Mrs. Daventry's, had no claim to beauty, while the widow's blue orbs were adorable, and put one in mind of all sorts of extravagant things, such as summer skies, and azure pools, and rich-hued sapphires.

As Josephine Daventry sat in the bower, toying with a rose, creamy and delicate of tint as her own skin, and stared at her unlovely child, her thoughts involuntarily leapt back to that time eighteen years before, when Arthur Daventry had wooed and won her.

It had not been a long and serious courtship—

far from it. Everything had been settled and arranged in less than a month, for time pressed, and the groom had to sail away on a cruise of two years' length, and the honeymoon had to be limited to a brief ten days. How well she remembered her first meeting with him! It was at a dance at the Naval College, to which a young married friend had managed to carry her off; for her aunt, with whom she lived, abhorred dances, and thought them sinful; and at sixteen Josephine Bellamy had never danced with anyone, save a school companion. So her delight at gliding round the room with the Navy men, who are proverbially good dancers, may be imagined. She was intoxicated with pleasure, and looked her loveliest.

At sixteen, if a girl is any way pretty, it is not difficult to look lovely; and it soon became apparent that Lieutenant Davenport was intoxicated with her beauty. His eyes followed her everywhere, and he sought her again and again as a partner, while she shyly half encouraged, and half repelled him.

However, it seemed he liked being repelled by her. Her coldness was more attractive to the young sailor than any other woman's fondness, and he soon found opportunity to tell her so, despite the dragon-like aunt, who lived in a perpetual state of terror lest some evil man should run away with their beautiful niece, their dead sister's only child, and thus bring down on their devoted heads her father's just wrath.

Now, Captain Bellamy was in the Navy too; and as soon as the impetuous wooer made known, by means of cablegram his wishes and desires with regard to his fair daughter, the gallant Captain immediately cabled back from the *Andropede*, where his vessel then was, his full approval and consent.

So there was a wedding, and Josephine was the bride and Arthur Davenport the groom; and she became, while still almost a child, the wife of a man fourteen years older than herself, of whom she knew little, and understood, if it were possible, less.

However, the understanding or not understanding him and his temperament, his likes and dislikes, mattered little. There was the brief honeymoon spent in lovely Devon, when the honey was too new and fresh to be dashed with any bitterness. Then some passionate caresses, and a tearful adieu, and the Lieutenant was again afloat, and his young bride again in the custody of her severe aunts.

Bride and bridegroom never met again *this* side of the silent river.

Little more than a year after the wedding the *Calliste* went down in a storm, and all hands were lost; and beautiful Josephine was left a widow, with a wee, girl baby, and exactly two hundred pounds per annum—all that her husband had to leave her.

She was deeply shocked at his loss, but not so much overcome as she would have been under different circumstances. After all, Arthur Davenport was little more than a stranger to her.

She had known him only two months, counting every day, from the one on which she met him to the one on which he bid her a tender and reluctant farewell. Moreover, she was so young that her feelings were not as powerful and strong as they became in later years. At thirty-four she was much more capable of experiencing a deep and devoted passion than she had been at sixteen.

The greater part of the love had, undoubtedly, been on *his* side. She had been flattered, as young girls are, by his attentions and admiration; and then he was so handsome!

His eyes were as blue as her own, and his hair as bright. Then his figure was well-knit, well-proportioned. He was the incarnation of manly grace and manly strength, and she had never had a lover before—indeed, had hardly spoken to a man. That is a young man!

One or two elderly cousins were permitted to call at the Misses Strakers' dovecot, and the parish parson, a bald-headed gentleman, of a Calvinistic turn of mind, who took a

gloomy view of the world and its inhabitants and their future state; and insinuated plainly that all people who disagreed with the doctrines and creeds he promulgated would enjoy a warm time of it hereafter, and suffer for their sins.

No girls of her own age were encouraged at the house, and she kept up an acquaintance with two or three school friends only with great difficulty.

She had few pleasures, and none of the freedom and amusement which makes the whole joy of a young creature's life.

What wonder, then, that she accepted Arthur Davenport when he implored her to become his wife, and gave no thought to those dark hours of separation that a woman wedded to a sailor must endure?

What wonder that she never thought how she would shrink and shiver when the wind howled round the house on a winter's night, and played hide-and-seek among the chimneys, and tore through the leafless trees with a shrill whistle or a dismal moan?

She had endured agonies on his behalf on stormy nights, and her worst fears came to be realised. Her husband perished in a gale, and she was left at seventeen, with a great sense of desolation in her life.

A great deal of this arose, no doubt, from her ungenial home; and she was overjoyed when her father, on hearing of his son-in-law's death, whom he had never seen, declared his intention of giving up the sea, and settling down as a country gentleman, in a small way.

It could not by any means be a large way, for his pension was not a big one, and he had little besides.

However, combined with Josephine's two hundred a year, it proved sufficient to keep up a pretty cottage in Leamshire, with a big garden full of old shady trees, whose gnarled, distorted roots formed comfortable seats, a couple of maid-servants, an outside man, and a little basket-phaeton and sturdy pony.

Not much, perhaps, all told, yet quite enough to give happiness to the three who lived at Fernside—for three only it was.

Neither father nor daughter had said anything, yet by tacit consent the Misses Strakers were not invited to share the pastoral home of their brother-in-law, Lawrence Bellamy.

They would, indeed, have been "snakes in Eden," and have spoiled the harmony of arrangements; and if they had been asked it is doubtful if they would have left Greenwich, and the neighbourhood of their pet parson, to whom they clung with the tenacity of limpets or octopi.

It was in that pretty rose and honeysuckle-wreathed cottage that Josephine Davenport spent the first years of her widowed life, and where Marian first began to toddle and prattle; and if the former was not exuberantly happy, at any rate she met with no fresh sorrow.

She was not without admirers, and even lovers, but she steadily refused to receive homage and attentions from anyone; and more than one man retired disconsolate, wishing the pretty widow was not so obdurate and cold-hearted.

She devoted herself to her father and child, and had little leisure during the first twelve or fourteen years of Marian's life.

After that her duties grew less, for the girl, being clever, read a great deal, and taught herself, and was skilful with her pencil, and would spend hours at the piano exercising her voice, which even at that early age promised to be a remarkably fine one.

They had few visitors, and did not seek to extend their circle of acquaintance. They were all in all to each—grandfather, daughter, and grandchild.

A chosen few were permitted to intimacy at Fernside, and duly appreciated the favour at its true worth.

However, it occurred to Mrs. Davenport, as she sat in her bower that hot summer's day, that it would soon be necessary to extend their circle of friends, for Marian looked

alarmingly grown up, as she sat there on the lawn sketching, and it would be only fair to her that she should mix with other folk, see a little of the fun and frolic of the world, have her chance as other girls did.

Josephine, remembering her own companionless, miserable girlhood, was determined her child's should not be like it.

True, Marian was different from the general run of girls. She was less sociable, more independent, was sufficient for herself, not needing companions to make or mar her happiness, that is, outside and beyond her mother and grandfather, and was content to find amusement in sketching and singing, and seemed to have no craving after admiration, smart clothes, and heaps of party going, as most girls of seventeen have.

Moreover, she was perfectly conscious of her own ugliness, and was in the habit of referring to it in the coolest and most indifferent manner, for all the world as though she was speaking of someone else's.

The only thing connected with herself that she was at all proud of was her voice—that lovely voice, that was like the warbling of a nightingale, or the trilling of a lark, so sweet, so clear, so flexible.

As to the rest, individually she never made an effort to hide her want of looks, or to supplement the deficiency by any personable little arts of the toilet.

She was curiously indifferent about it, and whenever she did turn out well-dressed and passable looking it was when her mother had dressed her and taken the trouble to choose every article of dress, and put on and arrange to with her own deft fingers; and then all Marian would do was to look in the glass, contemptuously regard her own reflection, and say—

"My dearest little mother, what is the use of taking so much trouble about me? You will never be able to transform your ugly duckling into a beautiful, graceful swan like yourself! You might just as well try to wash a nigger white, or make a silk purse out of our old sow's ear, or expect a hawk to turn into a dove. I am content. Why can't you be so too?" and with a laugh she would turn away, while her gentle mother would sigh involuntarily, and think what pride and pleasure she would have taken in dressing up a pretty girl who took a natural healthy interest in the performance.

## CHAPTER II.

"I see she flies me everywhere,  
Her eyes her scorn discover;  
But what's her scorn, or my despair,  
Since 'tis my fate to love her!  
Were she but kind whom I adore,  
I might live longer, but not love her more."

Mrs. DAVENTRY'S eyes were fixed full of regret on Marian's red face, when suddenly the girl looked up and saw it.

"Well, mother!" she queried, gaily. "Are you admiring my good looks as usual, and thinking what pretty surprise you will give me in the way of a new gown?"

"No, my dear. I was wondering how it is you escape sunstroke, sitting as you do for hours in that scorching blaze, with next to nothing on your head!"

"The advantages of a thick skull, dearest! My cranium has abnormal powers of resistance against heat."

"You will be ill some day, I am sure!" remarked the pretty widow, plaintively.

"Some day, some day,  
Some day I shall meet him!"

sang Marian, laughingly. "Sufficient for the day will be the evil thereof. At any rate, you cannot say that I escape sunburn and a red face," and she turned, displaying a nose the tip of which was vermilion, and a pair of cheeks garnished with scarlet patches, that



looked as though they meant to develop into blisters by-and-by.

"Marian, it is really dreadful!" exclaimed her mother in dismay.

"I know, dear!" rejoined the other, composedly. "There isn't a decent feature in the whole visage, and my head is the shape of a Dutch cheese. There is only one merit about my appearance, and that is that I leave it as Nature intended it to be. I don't try, as most ugly girls do, to hide my lack of attractions by plastering my unhappy skin with red and white paint, and making up for the deficiency of eyelash and eyebrow by dabs of blacking."

"I did not mean that," expostulated Mrs. Daventry, always needlessly tender of hurting her daughter's feelings with regard to her looks, or rather want of them. "I meant that it looks so sore and tender, quite blistered. You must really let me put some cream of roses on to night."

"Yes, dearest! You shall do just exactly what you like," replied Marian, with the extreme indifference and nonchalance. "Put on anything you wish, and I will rub it off as soon as I am in bed!" she added, *soothe* *coco*.

"There is the gate," said the widow, as the click of the latch of the rustic gate that shut off the wood from the garden was heard.

"Some one is coming. Can you see?"

"No, I can't see. But I know who it is."

"Who?"

"Ralph."

"How do you know?"

"He said he meant coming here this afternoon."

"Oh! Marian. You knew he was coming, and yet—you are so untidy and unfit to receive guests."

"It doesn't matter, mother."

"It does, dear, really. Run, before he sees you, and put on a fresh, clean gown."

"I could not escape now. He would see me running away and guess the reason. Besides, he has seen me so often in an untidy state that it would be quite a shock to his feelings if he saw me here in my studio (she always jestingly called the garden her studio) in a presentable and ladylike condition. Besides, it does not matter two pins with such an old friend," and she complacently returned to her sketching, awaiting the appearance of the visitor, whose footfall they could hear coming nearer and nearer, with great indifference.

"I differ from you," was all the remark Mrs. Daventry made.

Nevertheless, she was rather more than annoyed at this fresh evidence of her odd child's utter disregard for *les convenances*; for Ralph Overton was the only child of Squire Overton, of Hurst Manor, a rich and well-descended man; and young though he was, being just over twenty-two, Josephine, with a woman's keen instinct, had gauged the fact that his warm friendship for his childhood's playmate, whom he had held in his arms a long-clothes' baby when his own years numbered only five, was fast merging into something more serious and more tender.

Josephine felt she had good cause to be angry when she considered that Marian was not the sort of girl to attract many men, and that the man she had attracted by the beauty of her voice was such a lover as any girl might be proud of, and any woman glad to welcome as a son-in-law on his own account; and then there were the broad acres to which he was heir to boot, and they were not by any means to be despised.

No one knew that better than the widow, who, though far from being mercenary, yet valued money at its true worth, and would have been glad to see Marian well settled and provided for; for she was careless as to ways and means, and if left to her own devices with but two hundred a year would inevitably come to grief over £. s. d.

There was nothing more for her to have. Captain Bellamy's pension died with him, and it therefore behoved Josephine to admonish Marian as to her untidy dress when

the wealthy wooer was coming, and to do her best to neutralise the effect of a dirty blue linen gown and a sun-reddened face, not to speak of a mass of towzled hair, and fingers that were adorned with dabs of paint till they resembled rainbows.

"I am very glad to see you, Ralph!" she said, rising and going forward to meet him with a smile—a light, fairy-like figure in a white gown, with knots of pale pink ribbons, dainty, elegant, fresh-looking, a strong contrast to her daughter.

"Thanks," replied young Overton, taking the little hand extended, and giving it a hearty crush in his huge, sun-browned ones. "I came in by the wicket-gate. It is so much nearer than going round by the road to the front one, and I thought you wouldn't mind!"

"Of course we don't mind, do we, Marian?" rejoined Mrs. Daventry, lightly, smiling again, and looking altogether too pretty, too young, and too small to be the mother of the great untidy girl sitting ungracefully on the campstool on the lawn.

"Of course we don't," agreed Marian, offering a dabsed paw for the young man's acceptance, and dragging it away abruptly when he pressed it tenderly, his eyes resting on the red, ugly face without any of those signs of disapproval and disgust which a lover, under the circumstances, might have shown. "The boy is privileged to come in at the wicket gate if he likes!"

"The boy is thankful for small mercies," observed Ralph, a trifle pointedly.

"That is all right," declared Miss Daventry, as she put a brush in her mouth to further facilitate the mixing of some colours on her pallet.

"As he can't get big ones," he continued.

"Small mercies are better than none," retorted the lady of his love tersely.

"True. Still, when one gets the small ones, somehow or the other one can't help craving for the big ones!"

"It is not right to crave for anything. That is," she added, sententiously, "immoderately."

"How can a fellow help it?" he asked, with comical despair and earnestness.

"A fellow can help anything if he chooses."

"I don't believe that! At any rate, this fellow would help a good deal if he could."

"This fellow is a goose!" Marian told him with good natured, but supreme contempt.

"How awfully cruel of you to say that!"

"How awfully silly of you to say that I am cruel."

"You know you are—to me!"

"I know nothing of the sort. I am civil to you when you are sensible."

"I want something more than civility," rejoined the young man in low, impassioned tones, for Mrs. Daventry had returned to the bower and her book, and the young folk were virtually alone together on the lawn, with the exception of Spot, the spaniel, who was an admirable gooseberry, and never saw more than he ought to do, and, better than all, never repeated the tender or despairing speeches he heard.

"You can't have anything more," rejoined Marian, brusquely. "I have told you so over and over again."

"And I go on hoping you will change your mind over and over again."

"You might just as well give up hope."

"I can't."

"You may have to some day."

"Never! Unless I see you another man's wife."

"Pooh!" she laughed. "Not likely any other man will ever make such a goose of himself over me as you have."

"Why not?"

"Look at my eyes!" in great scorn. "Look at my nose, look at my Dutch cheese head! Do men, as a rule, fall in love with a Dutch cheese?"

"Marian. It is you who are a goose now!"

"I don't see it. I am too ugly for anyone to love me really."

"My dear girl, I love you really. Why won't you believe it? Why are you so obdurate?"

"Because it is too absurd."

"Why, you could sing any man's heart away!"

"Possibly—just while I was singing. But I can't be warbling all day long. Fancy beginning at six o'clock in the morning, when I awake, and going on while I take my bath and screw up my hair, and continuing to screech between mouthfuls of bread-and-batter and coffee! No, not exactly. It would be too ridiculous, and the moment I shut my mouth the spell would be broken, and I should be only my plain, unlovable self."

"The spell has not been broken for me, Marian!" he told her, regretfully.

"Oh, you have known me all my life. It is different with you. We are like brother and sister."

"I don't quite agree with you there," he remarked, dryly. "My feelings for you are hardly as tame and sober as a brother's would be."

"Moreover," she said, suddenly, lifting her eyes to him—those sharp, green eyes that saw more than the most lovely orbs in the world—"I don't believe you know your own mind. You can't!"

"Why not?"

"Because you are only a boy."

"I was twenty-two last month!" he told her with a deeply-injured air.

"Pooh! What's that? Wait till you are forty-two, and then see how desperately you will adore some woman!"

"I have no doubt I shall. The same woman that I adore now."

"Rubbish! Don't let us talk any more nonsense. Mother!" raising her voice, and effectually closing the discussion, "when are we going to have tea? I am actually dying for a cup!"

"Don't die, my dear, on that score. We can have it at once," and Mrs. Daventry touched a little bell that stood on the table near her twice sharply; and in a few minutes a neat-looking maid came out bearing a tray, containing the tea equipage, and a dish piled high with ruddy strawberries.

"This is absolutely delicious!" sighed Marian; as she demolished her second plateful of strawberries and iced cream, under the roof of the shady bower.

"I should say it is pleasanter than being out there in the sun," smiled the mother.

"She is a salamander, isn't she, Mrs. Daventry?" remarked Ralph, who was steadily working away at a pile of fruit.

"Yes; I think she is."

"You will have to send her to the Zoo."

"As the ugliest ape in the world!" laughed the girl. "You will come and see me when I am in the monkey-house?"

"Yes; but not as a monkey. We were talking about salamanders."

"Really! so we were. You might come and keep me company in the monkey-house."

"I shall be only too happy to keep company with you anywhere," he smiled, slyly.

"Good heavens! what an ugly couple they are!" thought Mrs. Daventry, as she sat opposite them, daintily stirring her tea, for Ralph Overton was the reverse of a handsome man.

He was very broad and strongly made, and not particularly tall, and his great shoulders and huge hands and feet gave him an ungainly, awkward look, while his face did not redeem his figure. His complexion was florid to a fault, his hair unmistakably sandy, while his light eyes protruded, and wore a look of perpetual amazement that was highly ridiculous and ludicrous.

Nevertheless, he was an extremely amiable, honest, good young man, and was likely to prove a devoted and attentive husband. So Mrs. Daventry forgave his want of beauty, and thought, in her secret heart, that he would be an admirable spouse in every way for her ugly duckling.

"I don't want anyone to keep company with me," snapped Marian; "and what an extremely vulgar expression, 'keeping company.' I might be a scullery-maid, and you the 'boots' at a tavern, from the way you speak!"

"I will take the place of 'boots' if you will be a scullery maid in the same establishment," Ralph told her, as he helped himself to another plateful of strawberries; love having by no means impaired either his appetite or his digestion.

"De talk sense," she cried, angrily, jumping up in her usual abrupt, jerky, ungraceful way. "I hate to have to listen to such rubbish. I won't do it," and she stalked away to the house with an air of offended dignity, leaving Ralph in a state of dismay, with a spoonful of strawberries and cream arrested half-way to his mouth, that was open ready to receive the toothsome dainty.

"My dear boy," observed Mrs. Daventry, quietly, when her daughter was out of ear-shot, "you make a great mistake in speaking as you do to Marian."

"Why?" he inquired, his eyes more amazed than ever.

"She does not like it."

"I can see she does not, Mrs. Daventry, and I don't exactly see why she shouldn't!" he said, with all the blundering blindness of a young man up to the chin in his first bad attack of calf-love.

"I know you don't, Ralph!" remarked the widow, assuming a motherly air. "You know I wish you well in your wooing?"

"Yes; thanks!" and he stretched out a great paw, and gave her fairylike fingers a grateful squeeze.

"So my advice to you is not to be too warm or too devoted, especially in public. She is ridiculously sensitive in some things, and, no doubt, being plain, she fancies she could not be loved lastingly for herself, or perhaps, that she might not retain your love, and—"

"She would to the last day of her life," he interrupted with vehement earnestness.

"Possibly, and if she were pretty her vanity would make her believe that, and she would be much more easy to woo. As it is, she can't credit it. Remember, she is very young. She may alter."

"I hope so!" fervently exclaimed Ralph.

"Steady, unobtrusive devotion will be your best card to play. That will impress her a great deal more than protestations, or extravagant speeches."

"I don't mean to make extravagant speeches!" he expostulated, dolefully.

"Perhaps not. Nevertheless, without meaning it, you do. Take my advice, speak in a sensible way to Marian. You know she is a sensible girl, and old for her years, and indulges in few or none of the frivolities of her sex."

"She doesn't indeed!" he agreed, thinking of the brusque way in which she had always snubbed him, so different from the way in which most marriageable maidens smiled on and petted him.

"Therefore you must treat her differently from most girls."

"Yes."

"Most girls want to get married, she doesn't! She is quite content here with me and her grandfather!"

"I am not surprised at that," he admitted, frankly, glancing round the prim pretty garden, and looking at the cottage, that was so picturesque and clean looking, with its thatched roof, twisted chimney stacks, white walls, and flower-wreathed porch. "Everything is so charming and homelike here, anyone could be contented. The Manor is not quite so pleasant."

"Yet it is ten times as large as our cottage!" smiled Josephine.

"True. Only we have no presiding female genius there to keep order and comfort in every department!"

"What do you call Mrs. Sparkes?" laughed the widow.

"She is an old nuisance," rejoined Ralph. "Takes all the privileges of an old servant, and abuses them right roundly. Nothing seems to have gone rightly for the last six years since my dear mother died."

"She was a terrible loss to you."

"Irreparable. The house has never seemed homelike since."

"I can well understand that."

"That is why I am anxious to get Marian to accept me! I want a wife!"

"You won't hurry her into accepting you, Ralph!"

"No. It seems not."

"Be patient, my dear boy."

"I would be as patient as Jacob, if I thought in the end I should get my reward!"

"You may. Patience overcomes great difficulties."

"Then I suppose," he said, reluctantly, with a longing glance at the little cottage that held his divinity, "as I have offended her, that I had better not stay to dinner to-night?"

"I think it would be better not to do so, though you know how glad I should be for you to. She is evidently ruffled, and then she has to practise to-night. To-morrow she goes into Loam to have a lesson from Collinson. She likes to be alone when practising."

"Yes. Well, I won't stop then, dearly though I should like to. Do you think I might drive her into town to-morrow?"

"Better not. She is never inclined to listen to anything when she is going for a singing lesson."

"I see! You think I might lapse into my old bad style?"

"I think it quite likely that you would."

"She ought to have a better master than Collinson."

"Yes. We think of looking out for a better one. Only it is rather difficult to get the big fish to come so far from town."

"Except at exorbitant fees!" put in Ralph.

"Exactly so! We shall have to think of some plan by which she can get finishing lessons at a less ruinous rate."

"Yes. Well, good-bye!" and after his usual bearish handshake, the young man took his departure with rather a dejected air, going, as he came, by the wicket-gate.

### CHAPTER III.

"If thou lovest me too much,  
It will not prove as true as touch;

Love me little, more than such,

For I fear the end.

Love me little, love me long,

Is the burden of my song:

Love that is too hot and strong

Burneth soon to waste."

"MOTHER," commenced Marian, abruptly, the next afternoon, as she entered the long, low, antique drawing room at the cottage, where all was dim and cool and sweet-scented, on her return from Loam, "Collinson says it is no use my going to him any more!"

"Why not?" inquired Mrs. Daventry, who looked the picture of graceful ease and elegance as she reclined on a low couch in the bay window, where the warm breeze blew on her, laden with the scent of new-mown hay, mignonette, sweet pea, wallflowers, and other summer blooms that made the garden gay and bright.

"Because he can't teach me anything more. He says I ought to go to London and have a few finishing lessons from Oraini or Trabernerini, or some of these great men."

"Hear me sing this!" she added quickly, dashing at the piano that stood open; and stumbling on to the stool, somehow or other she played the opening bars; and then her voice, clear as a clarion, soft, flexible, exquisite in every tone and cadence, rang out, and throbbed on the sweet, languorous summer air.

"When love with unconfined wings  
Hovers within my gates,  
And my divine Althea brings  
To whisper at my grates;  
When I lie tangled in her hair,  
And fetter'd to her eye,  
The birds that wanton in the air  
Know no such liberty.  
When linnet-like confined, I  
With shriller throat shall sing  
The sweetness, mercy, majesty,  
And glories of my king:  
When I shall voice aloud how good  
He is, how great should be,  
Enlarged winds that curl the flood  
Know no such liberty."

"How do I render it?" she demanded, swinging round, and breaking the spell of her sweet notes by showing her red, flushed face, framed in towed hair.

"Perfectly, I think!" returned her mother, warmly. "It does not seem to me that any one could teach you much!"

"Oh, yes, they could," contradicted Marian, with conviction, "I know I don't sing with sufficient expression."

"I should never have accused you of that fault!" smiled her mother.

"Perhaps not. You are a prejudiced critic, mother mine."

"I don't think so, dear! I always try to be just and impartial."

"Then you don't always succeed, dearest. Love blinds you to my faults. You won't see them."

"I certainly cannot see that there are any connected with your singing, Marian. If I could see them I should point them out to you."

"Yes! Only I am not satisfied, mother. I know there are two or three things that a thoroughly good master, a great singer himself, might show me how to improve."

"I don't think you will ever be satisfied with yourself Marian, or anything you do—not quite satisfied."

"Perhaps not. Only I should be much more satisfied with my vocalisation if I had a dozen lessons from Signor Oraini. Oh! mother!" throwing herself on her knees beside Mrs. Daventry, and leaning her rough, freckled hands, which were liberally and unbecomingly displayed by the short sleeves of her gown, which she had evidently outgrown, on the other's lap, "do let me go to town and have some instruction from him."

"I don't see how it is to be managed, Marian," replied the widow, seriously, a shadow of perplexity falling over her bright, winsome face. "You know our means are very limited. We never have much, or any, balance at our bankers at the end of each year. We have no resources beyond ourselves. A stay of six weeks or two months in London would cost a considerable sum, without the lessons; and, of course, Oraini would charge fifteen shillings or a guinea for each lesson!"

"The expense of the lessons need not trouble you, mother," cried the girl, quickly. "I have saved ten pounds, which will be ample to pay for them, I am sure."

"How have you managed to save so much, my dear? You don't get a great deal of pocket-money."

"I have been saving everything I possibly could for the last two years—everything you or grandfather gave me at Christmas, or on my birthday. You know I don't care much for dress, or ribbons or things of that kind most girls spend so much on."

"I know, dear!" agreed Mrs. Daventry, giving the hands on her lap a gentle little pat. "No one can say you spend much on your toilet."

"No, I don't care for smart gowns. But—I should so like the singing lessons."

"What is it you would like, dearest?" inquired a bluff, breezy voice, and Captain Bellamy entered the room, seeming to bring with him an odour, a soupçon of the salt waves



on whose crest his gallant ship had so often borne him.

"Marian wants to go up to London and have some instructions from Signor Orsini!" explained his daughter.

"The dence she does!" exclaimed the old man in his dismay, for he had a holy horror of towns and cities, and always felt stifled and caged in them.

"I don't quite see," continued Mrs. Daventry, calmly, "how it is to be managed, though I should like her to go, as she wishes it so much. Of course I cannot leave you, and I well know that you hate town, so I should not think for an instant of entailing such an infliction on you. But if there was anyone in London to whom she could go for a month or two, where she would be well-cared for and happy without us—"

"I should never be quite happy without you and grandad," interpolated Marian, quickly.

"I should be willing to let her go."

"Yes, yes, my dear, certainly!" agreed the Captain.

"Do you know of anyone?"

"Let me think," and he leant his head on his hand and put on his considering cap. "Are there not some cousins of yours who live in town?"

"Yes, to be sure. My cousin, Kate Willoughby, now Mrs. Paul Parfaiter."

"Do you think Mrs. Parfaiter would have Marian as a boarder for a few weeks?" inquired Josephine, while Marian's eyes fixed themselves eagerly on her grandfather's face.

"Well, I don't know," he began, dubiously. "She is not very young, and she never was famed for agreeability. As a girl she was cantankerous, and as an old woman I expect she's a caution. Something like your aunts, Josephine. You know the style!"

"Yes, I know," responded Josephine, making a little dry face.

"I shouldn't in the least mind her being disagreeable," cried Marian. "I shouldn't see very much of her. I should be engaged practising, and with my lessons!"

"I don't think she'd let you practise," laughed Bellamy. "Your do, re, mi would drive her mad, going on at all hours of the day."

"It doesn't drive you mad!"

"I am used to it. Makes all the difference in the world."

"Is she rich?" inquired Mrs. Daventry, pulling Spot's ears playfully. "Funny though it seems, I really know nothing about these cousins of ours."

"I don't fancy she is very well off. They live in Gower-street, which is not a particularly fashionable place now, and Parfaiter lost a good deal over Egyptians."

"Then perhaps she might not object to a little addition to her income?"

"Perhaps not. I can't say. She is a curious woman, and one never knows how to take her."

"The best thing I can do then," said Josephine, "is to write to her, and ask her if, to oblige us, she will consent to receive Marian into her house for a little while."

"Yes, I suppose it is," agreed the Captain, rather doubtfully.

"Mother, what a dear you are!" whispered Marian, giving her a hug.

"What is their number in Gower-street?" inquired Mrs. Daventry, rising and going over to her davenport, which, like herself and all her surroundings, was pretty and elegant.

"Three hundred they were living at when I last heard of them."

"I will try that number," and accordingly a letter was dispatched to that address, and the answer awaited with considerable anxiety by all, though outwardly Josephine was as calm and collected as usual, for it was not often she allowed anything to ruffle or disturb her gentle, well-bred, ladylike calm of demeanour.

Two days later the expected letter arrived. It was written in a crooked, angular hand that was difficult to decipher, and was worded

in a formal, old-fashioned style. Still, it set forth with a certain amount of stilted cordiality that the writer would be glad to welcome her young cousin for a stay of some weeks in her house in order that she might prosecute her musical studies; and that no remuneration would be required or accepted beyond what would just defray the cost of her meals. Mrs. Parfaiter stating that the narrowness of their income prevented them from receiving her entirely as a guest, as they would wish to do.

She further stated that a young man, a cousin of her husband's, Bertram Blissington, already lived with them, and an aunt of her own, so that another addition to the family circle would in no way annoy or disturb them.

Marian was delighted at the receipt of the letter, and her mother wrote a grateful note of thanks to Mrs. Parfaiter, while all the Captain did was to wonder how old the aunt was, and whether she was likely to rival old Parr!

Preparations for Marian's departure were hurried on, and as she did not care a bawbee about her clothes, she was ready to go at the end of four days. On the evening before she left, young Overton came over to bid her adieu.

He looked particularly dejected and gloomy. To his fond and youthful imagination this was the end of all things. The girl he loved was going to town, where she would meet smart, stylish, well set up fellows, who had plenty to say for themselves, and who knew how to say it well. Of course, she would be taken with one of these London beaux; equally, of course, they would all go mad about her and her voice. She would be to many of them what she was to him—the beginning and end of everything. He forgot poor, foolish boy, that few men fall desperately in love with an ugly woman! As a rule, the male animal is attracted by physical loveliness in the female animal. Of course, there are exceptions to this rule. Ugly women have been madly adored. Then, generally, they have been possessed of a *beauté du diable*—an extraordinary something that has held captive the affections of the stronger vessel.

Marian had her wonderful, beautiful voice. Still, as she herself said, she could not always be singing; and many who met her would be unaware that she possessed any wonderful gift, and, judging from her plain exterior and somewhat rough manner and ungraceful ways, would be the reverse of fascinated.

"I wish you were not going to town," he grumbled, as he sat beside her in the bay-window after dinner, all his misery and uneasiness shining plainly in his light eyes.

"Oh, do you?" she rejoined indifferently, watching a bumble-bee who went booming by.

"I do."

"I think it is a very selfish wish."

"I don't. I want you all to myself. I can't bear the idea of your going amongst strangers, of meeting a lot of new people, of making heaps of new friends. I wish you would be content with your old ones, tried and true."

"I am quite content with my old friends," she rejoined, with unwonted gentleness. "It is not to make new friends that I am going to London. It is to improve my voice, as you know."

"As if that could be improved," he said indignantly. "Is it possible to improve the warbling of the nightingale, or the lark, to gild refined gold, or paint the lily? Nothing could improve your voice!"

"You are getting quite poetical and enthusiastic!" she laughed. "At an rate, Ralph, I shall not find such a warm admirer anywhere as you are."

"No, I am sure you will not. Oh! Marian don't forget me. Love me a little, only a little. I will be content with small mercies. Indeed, I will."

"My dear Ralph, I am only going away for two months. To hear you bewail my departure one might imagine I was going for at least two years!"

"Anything may happen in two months," he sighed.

"Of course. We may all be dead and buried by that time, or the moon may have turned into green cheese!"

"That is not what I mean! I fear the end. I know this visit will change you."

"Possibly I may not be quite such a country bumpkin when I return as I am now! I hope I shan't be."

"Don't say that you wish to change," he implored.

"I should like to, in some respects," she retorted. "There is room for improvement. I might shed my skin like a snake, and start a new one with advantage!"

"I am quite content with the skin you have."

"Shows your bad taste. You are not progressive, like the rising generation."

"Come. I will sing to you," she added, rising and going over to the piano, and with a spice of malice she chose, "Good-Bye."

"Falling leaf, and fading tree,  
Lines of white in a sullen sea,  
Shadows rising on you and me;—  
The swallows are making them ready to fly,  
Wheeling out on a windy sky.  
Good-bye, summer! Good-bye, good-bye.  
What are we waiting for! Oh! my heart!  
Kiss me straight on the brows! And part!  
Again! Again!—my heart! my heart!  
What are we waiting for, you and I!  
A pleading look—a stifled cry,  
Good-bye for ever!—Good-bye, good-bye!"

And with those ominous words, "Good-bye for ever!" ringing in his ears, the young man went back to his own home a hundred times more dejected and wretched than he had been before.

#### CHAPTER IV.

"When thou singest, hearts beat low,  
Ellen Evelina;

Admiration great, and free

Lingers on thy melody.

Thou canst win the world's applause."

THOUGH it was a bright sunny afternoon when Marian arrived in London the place looked dull and miserable to her country-bred eyes; while the din and roar, the ceaseless traffic of the great city rang in her ears, and nearly deafened her, and the shaking of the "growler" that conveyed her from Victoria to Gower-street, she found most unpleasant.

"I shan't enjoy myself an atom outside the lessons," she said to herself, a trifle dolefully, as the cab stopped before a grim, time-blackened house, the blinds whereof were not of the whitest and freshest, nor the windows of the cleanest, and she alighted.

The quaint old Queen Anne door, with a ram's head by way of a knocker, was opened by an elderly woman, whose face was the reverse of agreeable or pleasant, and who was a great contrast to Mrs. Daventry's trim, well-trained young country maid.

In response to Marian's query for Mrs. Parfaiter she, without uttering a word, conducted the new arrival into a dim, dark-panelled dining-room that had a faint, musty sort of odour hanging about it, like the reminiscence of many bygone dinners.

In this room, seated in a capacious arm chair was a small, slight woman, between fifty and sixty, with a thin, sallow face, and curiously long head, which was surmounted by a mass or lump of jute plaits, that was badly put on, and differed in colour to the tresses banded closely to the forehead in front, and showed plainly that head and hair belonged to two parishes.

Her dress was a rusty-black cashmere, and frills of yellow cambric were pleated into the neck, and fell like "dog Toby" frills over the lean hands.

She got out of the big chair as Marian entered, and going up to her, said,—

"You must be Marian Daventry? I am Anne Parfaiter!"

"Yes," returned the girl, in her usual abrupt fashion. "You expected me to-day, I suppose?"

"Yes. Your mother wrote me that you would arrive this afternoon, and I hope you will be comfortable and happy while you are with us."

"Thank you," said Marian, casting a dubious look on the heavy horse-hair covered furniture, the worn carpet, massive side-board, and dingy curtains, that were in striking contrast to the bright, light modern prettiness of the things at the Cottage; and, besides being dull and old-fashioned, the room lacked that exquisite clean freshness that characterised Mrs. Daventry's miniature dwelling.

"Of course it will be very different from the country," remarked Mrs. Parfaiter, who noticed the glance. "But the only way, my dear, to get over what is not pleasant to you in life is to take as little notice as possible of what annoys you, and make the best of everything."

"Quite so," agreed Marian, smiling slightly.

"And now," said the little old lady, briskly, "you had better come up to your room. You will wish to change your dress, and indulge in ablution after your journey," and she, in her turn, glanced at the girl's crumpled tweed gown, that was anything save suitable for the hot June day, and at her heated face, adorned with one or two prime London smudges.

"Yes," said Marian, shortly.

"We dine at seven," Mrs. Parfaiter told her, as she led the way up an oaken staircase, the balustrades and rails of which were elaborately carved, "so you will have a full hour to rest and unpack in. We assemble in there," nodding towards a large room which they were passing, the door whereof stood open, and showed that it was grand with the ghostly grandeur of a bygone age, and that the ceiling had once been frescoed, probably by some Roman artist, for here and there the head of a cupid, or the arm of a goddess peeped out in pristine freshness from the general dinginess and dirt, "a quarter before that hour. Will you have the courage to come down by yourself, or shall I come and fetch you?"

"I will come by myself, thank you. I will not trouble you to come up so far," for now they had ascended four long flights of stairs, and Marian thought they would soon reach the attic.

However, the room Mrs. Parfaiter took her to was large and spacious, and furnished with old-fashioned solid comfort, albeit the four-post bed did look like a hearse, with its dingy purple hangings, and that there was a good deal more polished floor than strips of carpet to cover it. However, she did not stop to criticise much.

She rapidly threw off her wraps, and, with equal rapidity, unpacked and took out a thin black grenadine gown, which, after liberal ablutions, she donned; and then throwing herself into a cavernous armchair, she sat looking out of the window, and listening to the roar of the passing traffic, and that echo which came borne on the breeze from more crowded thoroughfares, until the onlooker clock on the tall mantel-shelf warned her that it was time to descend to the ghostly room with the frescoed, where the Parfaiteurs "assembled" before dinner.

She felt none of the trepidation that most young girls would have felt as she turned the handle and went into the drawing-room. There were four people there—Mrs. Parfaiter, a short, stout, elderly man, with a bald head and an amiable smile, a very old woman who was sitting in an arm chair propped up with pillows, and who seemed afflicted with the palsy, for her head wagged from side to side unceasingly, and last, though not least in the girl's eyes, the very handsomest young man she had ever seen.

Mrs. Parfaiter introduced all to her, and she found the handsome young man was Mrs. Parfaiter's nephew, Bertram Blissington. She looked at him keenly, and found he was

regarding her with equal attention; and for the first time in her life her eyes dropped before a man's gaze. She found it impossible to encounter, unflinchingly, the glance of those bright blue eyes, bright and blue as her mother's pretty orbs.

He made some casual remarks to her, and then devoted himself to Mrs. Salaman, the old aunt, for whose benefit he was graphically describing a comedy which he had seen the night before; but when dinner was announced an attendant appeared and supported the old lady down to the dining-room, while Blissington gallantly escorted his hostess, and Mr. Parfaiter gave his arm to Marian. Blissington sat directly opposite the latter, and during dinner she had plenty of opportunities of observing him, of which she took advantage, for he scarcely addressed a single word to her, devoting himself to the elder ladies, and she felt annoyed with herself for being attracted by him.

But he looked so aristocratic, so elegant in his evening dress—for she learnt from his conversation that he was going to a party later on—his hair was so glossy, his eyes so bright, his complexion so fresh and healthy, though not in the least florid, like Overton's, and his features so perfect, that again and again she stole a look at him, and mentally resolved to sketch that beautiful face, for she was an enthusiastic admirer of beauty.

She adored her mother, because she was lovely; she would go into raptures over a handsome horse, a gay-plumaged bird, a delicately-coloured flower. The artistic part of her temperament was strongly appealed to by anything beautiful.

Being ugly herself, irredeemably and hopelessly so, she worshipped physical loveliness in others, and Ralph Overton's want of good looks was the probable cause of her refusal of him. She could not bring herself to consent to forge a chain which would tie her for life to a man as ugly as herself. She would rather be free and at liberty to study anything charming that came within her reach.

As she looked at Bertram's boyish, animated face, and listened to his easy, fluent, entertaining conversation, she began to realise how it was that women fell desperately and madly in love, and were ready to give up anything and everything for the object of their adoration.

However, she did not see much of this Adonis during the first four days of her stay in London. The season was at its height, and he had more engagements than he could accept.

He only dined in Gower-street one other evening, and that was the fifth after she arrived. After dinner, Mrs. Parfaiter, having gone upstairs to see that her aunt was comfortably tucked up and arranged for the night, and the gentlemen being still in the dining-room, Marian, feeling a little dull and sorrowful, went the piano to solace herself with some music. It was the first time she had sung in the evening, and Blissington had not heard her. The song she chose was "Adieu!"

"Adieu, adieu! our dream of love

Was far too sweet to linger long;

Such hopes may bloom in bowers above,

But here they mock the fond and young." &c.

She had never sung with such intensity and power before, perhaps because she had never felt before as she did that night. All the wild, deep feelings that lay but half-awakened in her heart made her voice quiver, and soften with exquisite pathos; and when she struck the last chord she was startled by a "Thank you!" just at the back of her, and turning, she saw it was Blissington.

"Forgive me for intruding!" he said, bending his handsome head over her. "I heard you singing downstairs, and could not resist coming up to hear better. It does not often fall to my lot to hear such a voice as yours out of the profession!"

"You are very kind," murmured Marian, blushing an uncomfortable crimson, and feel-

ing very much pleased, despite her embarrassment.

"Is it really true that you have come up to town to take lessons? My uncle has told me so. Only I can't credit it!"

"Yes. It is quite true."

"But, pardon me, I have heard most of the famous singers of the day, both public and private, and fail to see where there is room for improvement in your singing!" he remarked, as he dropped into a chair beside her.

"Mr. Collinson, my master at Loam, thought I lacked expression."

"I cannot agree with him," said Bertram, earnestly. "I thought your rendering of 'Adieu!' quite perfect."

"Thanks!" muttered the girl, feeling exuberantly pleased.

"Whom do you think of going to?" he inquired, interestedly, for being intensely fond of singing he found himself suddenly much interested in this ugly, countenanced girl, notwithstanding her red face and ill-made frocks, that had at first shocked and displeased his fastidious taste.

"Orsini."

"A first-rate man. One of the best teachers we have."

"So I have been told," she said, recovering her usual coolness; "and I should like very much to have lessons from him, only I don't think it will be possible."

"Why not?"

"He is so much engaged just now. He has only two mornings in the week disengaged, and then the lesson would have to be at the rather early hour of eight."

"Surely that is not too early for you, country bred?" smiled handsome Bertie.

"No. I should not mind that; only," with a little reluctance, "there is another drawback."

"May I ask what it is, or will you think me rude?"

"He wants five-and-twenty shillings a lesson!" said Marian, lugubriously, blurted it out abruptly, "and I can't afford that," thinking of the saved ten pounds that she had thought would do such wonders—obtain so much.

"That, certainly, is a heavy price. However, I know Orsini. In fact, he is a personal friend, and, as I once did him a kindness, he may consent to teach you for less if I ask him to do so. Shall I?"

"Oh, yes, will you, please?" exclaimed the girl, eagerly, looking with fresh veneration at this wonderful young man, who, in addition to his other virtues, seemed to know every one in the great world of London who was worth knowing.

"With pleasure; and, as my reward, I shall ask you to sing to me whenever you can."

"I shall be very pleased to sing to you."

"Will you give me one more now? I wish I might ask for an unlimited number; but, unfortunately, I am due at Lady Churton's at ten, and must not linger long or I shall be late."

"What shall I sing?" she asked, half-shyly.

"Won't you choose something yourself?" he returned, "as I do not know the gems of your repertoire."

And, thus adjured, she sang Shelley's beautiful "Love's Philosophy," set charmingly to music by Salaman, and did it full justice, and Blissington left reluctantly, after having made her promise to sing to him on the following evening—a promise which she willingly made.

And the next afternoon behold this female cynic was busy with needle and thread trying to convert the grenadine gown into something a little stylish, and more like those worn by the women in Hyde Park, whither Mrs. Parfaiter had taken her to see the fashionable world disport itself.

She brushed her rebellious locks for a full half-hour, and twisted them up in an elaborate and somewhat tidy fashion, and stuck a silver pin through the coils, and slipped on a



solitary silver bracelet, and actually pinned a rose that she had purchased that morning in her bosom, and descended to the drawing-room, with that bosom fluttered as it never had been before in all her seventeen years.

Blissington was there as usual in evening dress, for it was an affection of this "society" young man never to sit down to dinner in anything save correct swallow-tails, and he immediately began to talk to her—a proceeding very different from the cool ignominy of her that had gone before.

He took her down to dinner, and chatted most agreeably the whole time, and followed her up to the drawing-room immediately after the meal was finished, leaving his uncle, who was just a trifle too fond of the full and flowing cup, alone at the board.

"I have come for my treat," he began, playfully. "Is it too soon after dinner to ask you to sing to me?" the blue eyes looking down into hers, with bright inquiry in them.

"Oh, no!"

"You are not inconvenienced by anything of that sort?"

"No. Collinson told me I was too young for anything of that kind yet, and too strong to feel the wear-and-tear of much practice as most women would," she returned, nervously, looking through her songs.

"That is fortunate. Hard work affects most voices."

"It may mine when I am older," she told him, naively.

"I am going to be very rude and ask your age. Will you mind telling me?"

"Not in the least," she replied, frankly. "I was seventeen last month."

"So young as that!" he exclaimed, considerably surprised, for she looked older. "Then your voice will improve? It will be glorious when you are twenty!"

"I hope so," she said, shyly, sitting down at the piano.

"Shall I begin now?" she asked, with a swift glance up into the handsome face above her.

"Please, do!" and she commenced and went on from song to song as he bade her for over two hours, and he shutting his eyes and leaning back in a comfortable chair, fancied himself in Paradise listening to the angels singing, as the beautiful notes rose and fell and throbbed passionately on the balmy air. Only when he opened them he would involuntarily give a little shiver as his eyes fell on her face, and realised that, as far as looks were concerned, Miss Daventry was anything save an angel.

From that evening Marian and Blissington became fast friends. She forgave him his early indifference to herself, and he was strongly attracted by her great gift. Moreover, he was as good as his word, and used his influence with Orsini, so that the famous master not only received her as a pupil twice a week at a reasonable and convenient time, but did so at less than half the terms he had asked her.

How Bertie managed it was a mystery to her, and she was not the sort of girl to seek to unravel it. She simply took the goods the gods provided in the shape and form of singing lessons from a great teacher at a moderate rate, and was thankful for them.

More she did not want to know, though she was deeply grateful to Bertie for what he had done for her—grateful in a passionate, intense way that he little recked of.

He was certainly very kind to her. He gave up many of his own engagements, and procuring tickets for all the best concerts and the opera, took her to them, accompanied by Mrs. Parfaiter, who was always ready to do anything the young man asked her, once her elderly relative was safely tucked away.

It was a new experience to Marian, and a very pleasant one. She worked hard all day at scales and new songs, but at night it was delightful to go to those gaily-lit halls, and hear first-rate music and vocalisation, accompanied by an extremely handsome young man who was all respectful attention and devotion,

and who paid her the most flattering compliments.

It was sweet to her vanity; and deep down in that rough, frank nature there must have been a big vein of vanity, for she liked his compliments, longed for them, laid herself out for them, and rejoiced when they were paid to her.

He told her all about himself and his success—how at the age of fourteen he had been left an orphan, and came up from the country to live with his uncle in the old house in Gower-street—how he had early gone on 'Change, and how every speculation he dabbled in proved successful, and filled his pockets with money.

"I have made a clear eight hundred a-year," he said, one sultry night, as they sat by the open window watching the starlit sky, "and I think that is not bad for a fellow of twenty-seven!"

"I think it is very good," ventured Marian, admiringly.

"Many men double my age have not made as much."

"No, indeed."

"I think now I shall out it all. It will be the safest plan. If I stay on a member of the house I shall be tempted to gamble with my little fortune, for of course you know it is nothing but gambling?"

"Oh, isn't it!" ejaculated the girl, quite ready to believe anything he said.

"No. Then I may lose all. Eight hundred a-year is quite enough for me. I have no very expensive tastes."

"You go out a great deal," observed Marian, shrewdly. "That must be expensive, I think!"

"Yes, it is. But I don't care for society really. I have become very tired of it. Had too much of it, I suppose."

"Too much of anything is good for nothing."

"Exactly so. A surfeit of good things clogs one's palate, and brings a distaste for those things we once prized. Moreover, I was born and bred in the country, and I have a lingering and insurmountable desire once more to live amid green trees, and fields and flowers."

"That is only natural."

"Perhaps the longing has become deeper since you described your home to me. It must be a rural Paradise!" with an envious sigh.

"It is delightful, I think, and I hope you will come and see it some day."

"There is nothing I should like better."

"My mother will be very glad to see you," she told him.

"And I am all anxiety to see this pretty young mother you have so often spoken of. What with her romantic history and her beauty she must be most interesting."

"She is," agreed Marian, warmly, feeling none of that jealousy with regard to her mother that she might have with any other woman had Bertie Blissington shown interest in her, or a desire to see her, and admire the beauty he had heard praised.

And so it came to pass that it was an understood thing between the young people that he should spend his autumn holidays at Loam, and it reconciled Marian to leaving town, which she did after a prolonged stay of three months.

The night before she left she sang for Bertie, and when she finished, the two young people being alone in the room, and the young man carried away by the beauty of her melodious voice, stooped down, and throwing his arm round her shoulders kissed her, murmuring—

"Marian, I shall never be able to exist without your singing. You will have to become my wife!" and Marian muttered some incoherent words of assent, feeling translated to the seventh heaven at the mere thought of becoming his wife.

However, "prudence came with the light," and the next day the young man said nothing further, and bid her an ordinary farewell at

Victoria, whither he accompanied Mrs. Parfaiter to see her off on her homeward journey.

## CHAPTER V.

"Once I thought I could adore him,  
Rich or poor, beloved the same;  
Now I hate him and abhor him,  
Now I loathe his very name.  
Oh, if I could clasp him dying,  
And receive his parting breath;  
In one burst of burning passion,  
I would kiss him into death."

MARIAN WAS warmly and affectionately received by her mother and grandfather, and was very glad to see them, though not Ralph, whose round, surprised eyes, and florid face were about the first things she saw on Loam station.

The parting with the other *one* had been too recent for her to any way relish young Overton's presence.

It reminded her of what had been, and she only wished to remember what was. It did not suit her present frame of mind to have him dying and sighing at her side, and she snubbed him unmercifully, to his great disgust and extreme alarm.

Mrs. Daventry soon saw that her child was changed, and was not long in discovering the reason of it.

Her frocks were no longer crumpled and tossed, and devoid of ribbons, collar, cuffs; her hair no longer fell in a towzled mass on the nape of her neck, and strayed into her eyes; it was tidily arranged, and far more becoming, and the widow noted she took care of her complexion, which a residence in town had certainly improved by toning down its vivid hue. Her manners, too, were less abrupt and jerky, and she tried to be womanly and gentle.

"Some man has been talking to her!" thought Josephine. "I wonder who? She does not seem to have seen anyone save Orsini, Parfaiter, and that boy, his nephew. It can't be either of those, I should think. Still, who can it be? Surely she can't be in love. She is not the sort of girl for that. It is only her natural feminine vanity that has been awakened at last, and with it a natural desire to look well, and please others."

Josephine was wrong in her supposition. Marian was in love, and very madly in love too. But she said not a word about her passion to her mother, though she spoke of the object of it in a casual way, and told how very kind he had been to her, what he had done for her with Orsini, how many places he had taken her too, the *entrée* to which she would never have got without his good offices, and enlarged upon his successes on the Stock Exchange, and his present weariness of London and gay London life, and his desire for green fields, rippling brooks, and other rural and rustic things.

"Do you say he is fond of shooting?" asked her grandfather, one bright morning early in October, when she had been back a week or ten days.

"He told me he liked it immensely, only had few opportunities of indulging his liking!"

"We might give him a chance of indulging it down here," remarked Bellamy, looking at Josephine for approval of his suggestion.

"How?" inquired Mrs. Daventry, while Marian listened eagerly.

"Overton has asked me to shoot his covert next week and bring another gun with me, so I thought we might ask Parfaiter's nephew down to stay with us for a while, or indeed as long as he likes if agreeable to you both?" with a look at his two dear ones; "for, by Jove, I think the boy has been more than kind to our little girl, and I should like to show Anne that I appreciate the ready way in which she received our little girl into her house!"

"Yes," assented Josephine, with a quick glance at her daughter, who, however, having

mastered the first shock of surprised delight, looked unconcerned.

"We have a spare bedroom?"

"Yes."

"Then what do you say, my dear, to having Blissington as a guest? Will it be quite agreeable to you, his being here?"

"Quite," returned the widow, cordially. "I shall be very pleased to show civility to one who has been so kind to Marian."

And so the letter was written and despatched to Gower-street, and still the girl breathed not one syllable to her mother of her feelings with regard to Bertie, nor told of those few whispered words that had changed her life to the glowing beauty of a love-poem.

Something kept her silent—an undefinable feeling that she did not analyse. Perhaps it was that she did not feel quite certain of the affections of this handsome young man, and realised to a certain extent that he had been carried away by an unreal impulse on that evening when he had asked her to be his wife. At any rate, he had done nothing very love-like since, beyond writing rather a formal letter, and sending a book which he promised her.

Still the memory of those few passionate words was very sweet to her. She thought of them every day, and repeated them softly to herself almost hourly, and hugged her wild passion for him closer to her heart, and kept it warm in that sacred maiden shrine.

Bertie Blissington was in anything save a good temper the morning on which he received Captain Bellamy's note of invitation. He had assisted at a gay bachelor dinner the night before at the Duke's Club, and as a result had a headache, and felt blue and feverish, and the reverse of amiable or agreeable.

He cursed the footman pretty roundly when he brought him a score of letters, his shaving water, and an intimation that it was eleven o'clock, opprobrium which the man bore with untroubled equanimity as he prepared his master's bath, and arranged other things necessary for his toilet.

"A dozen bills," muttered the young man, crossly, turning over the letters, "half as many invitations, which I shall not accept; and hallo! here's one from my little nightingale, and another from Loam! I wonder who that's from?" and he tore it open hurriedly.

"Humph!" he muttered when he came to the end of it. "That looks like business. I suppose she has told them that nonsense I talked to her!" and then he read Marian's letter.

It was not very long; in fact, it erred on the side of brevity, and it was chiefly urging him to accept the invitation to the Cottage for "the good of his health," &c.

Through the simple little letter ran a vein of passionate love, which the young man, reading with hasty indifference, did not see; and he thought it a bit of a bore that she should want him to go eighty miles to see her, notwithstanding the strong inducement of popping at the partridges and pheasants.

"Suppose she considers herself engaged to me? Whew! What a mess to have got myself into for a few foolish words? What demon of mischief possessed me? I shan't be able to call my soul my own! Never know what will be wanted or expected of me. Women are such curious, uncertain creatures! However, I shall hear her sing again, and that will be an undeniable pleasure. I believe the little girl really likes me, though I take it she will be capricious like all her sex, tie me to her apron string one day, and the next tell me to go to Jericho! Only I'm afraid she won't to the latter. Half wish she would! Best to go down, can't well get out of it. Fortune may favour me, and set me free!" and having indulged in this soliloquy, he rose and dressed himself, preparatory to inditing an epistle of acceptance to Captain Bellamy.

A few days later Bertie was on his way to Loomshire, and, on alighting at Loom station, found Marian waiting to greet him, accom-

panied by an elderly man, who was 'bearded like the Pard.' He shortly discovered this was his host, the Captain.

They were soon packed into the little pony phaeton, leaving Blissington's luggage and other impedimenta to be brought on by the servant, and were bowling along country lanes, between hedges where the blackberries hung in ripe, tempting clusters, and where the trees were still green and well leaved, and the sun shone over all, throwing a golden glamour around that brought back memories of the departed summer.

"What a pretty cottage!" exclaimed Bertie, as they came in sight of Marian's home.

"Yes; and inside it's comfortable, too!" said the Captain, as Marian brought the fat pony to a standstill with a dexterous turn of the wrist before the porch, now wreathed with the blood-red leaves of a creeper, that twined and twisted in graceful luxuriance over it.

As the young man followed Marian into the pretty hall he caught sight of a fair, beautiful woman, in a simple grey dress, that showed off her lithe figure admirably.

She came forward to meet them, holding out her alim white hands, and to his astonishment, Marian said,—

"This is my mother, Mr. Blissington!"

"I need not tell you how glad I am to see you!" said Josephine, with an adorable smile, that showed her white teeth and many dimples, and made her look ten times more girlish than when her face was in repose.

"You are—very kind!" stammered the young man as he shook hands, too much astonished to say more.

Marian had often spoken of her mother, and described her as pretty, but Bertie was quite unprepared for so much youthful loveliness and grace.

With that slight flush of excitement on her cheeks, that made her beautiful eyes glow brighter, and her crowning glory of golden hair, she looked ten years younger than she really was—little more than a girl in fact, and not at all like a matron, and the mother of that ugly young woman, who sat beside her in such an ungraceful attitude, and made such an excellent foil for her brilliant good looks.

"You will be glad of a cup of tea after your journey!" said Mrs. Daventry, as she began to manipulate the old Salopian cups.

"Very glad!" agreed Bertie, eagerly, inwardly swearing at himself for being so dazed, and appearing such a fool, as he thought he must by reason of his silence.

"Did you have a pleasant journey?" she continued, beaming on him, quite unconscious of the effect her personal charms had had on him, and only intent on being agreeable to this young man who had been kind to her child.

"Very, thank you! The train was a remarkably quick one!"

"It is not a long journey from town."

"No; not at all; and the scenery all the way is charming!"

"We have some very pretty bits of scenery in the immediate neighbourhood! We must show them to you. If you sketch at all, you will find them worthy of your pencil."

"I sketch very little; still, I shall be delighted to see the pretty places."

"You will come across a good many of them out shooting. Squire Overton's estate is famed."

"That will add to the pleasure of the sport."

"Yes; undoubtedly."

"Have you been singing much?" he asked Marian, as she handed him a cup of tea, wrenching his eyes away from her mother's winsome face with an effort.

"Yes; a great deal."

"I hope you will let me hear you to-night."

"Yes; I will if you wish it."

"I do, very much. I have been longing to hear you again. Your daughter has a wonderful voice, Mrs. Daventry!" he went on,

addressing her as an excuse to look at her again without rudeness.

"I think she has improved greatly since her visit to London. Orsini must be a capital master! I was vain enough to think there could be no improvement in her singing, but, though I am no judge, I can hear the difference now. Her style is much more finished!"

"Yes; no doubt. There is no one like Orsini!" and then Captain Bellamy came in, and the conversation became general.

"How very lovely your mother is!" said Bertie, in a low tone, to Marian that evening, as he sat beside her at the piano, his words for her, his eyes fixed on Mrs. Daventry's delicate profile, that the light of the lamp, near which she was sitting, threw out in strong relief against the red velvet cushion her head was leaning against.

He could gaze without fear of being detected by her, for she was reading, and seemed absorbed in her book.

"Yes, is she not?" rejoined the girl, warmly—not jealous, not even suspicious of the feeling that had already taken root in the young man's heart. "I think there is no one like her!"

"And you think rightly," he rejoined. "I have never seen a more perfect face, nor a sweeter expression," and then he asked her to sing again, and listened to her notes; and studied Josephine's face, and felt perfectly happy.

The visit he had rather dreaded seemed likely to prove far more pleasant than he had anticipated.

Every morning, or nearly every morning, he went out with the Captain, and tramped with him and Ralph, and sometimes the Squire, after the partridges and pheasants, in the afternoon coming back somewhat weary to the cosy fireside in the parlour and a hot cup of tea. Then later on there was dinner, always well-dressed and well-served, and with charming accessories of cobweb-like glass, shiny silver, and a profusion of flowers, and above all, his hostess's lovely face.

He began to realise what home was after he had spent a week at the Cottage, and began to long for a place of his own just like it, and, it must be admitted, for Josephine too.

Poor Josephine! She knew nothing of her child's mad infatuation for their visitor, and the hopes she nourished in regard to him.

She was quite unaware that any tender words had ever passed between them, and from their manner when together no one would have guessed that they had once been on the verge of becoming openly declared lovers, that one still desired that it should be so—in secret. Marian was proud, and her pride came to her aid in this the first trial of her young life.

For a few days after Bertie's arrival at the Cottage she had been wild with suppressed joy—ready to sing, laugh, dance, be gay with the gayest of Heaven's creatures.

Then came a dark day when she suspected, and then a still darker one, when she knew intuitively, by the light of her own feelings, that Bertram Blissington loved her mother—that she was no more to him than the merest stranger who passed him in the street.

What pen could describe the feelings of this young, passionate creature when she discovered this, to her, doubly horrible, fact?

She was fiercely angry, first with herself, for having stooped to love, and then with this man, who had played with her—who had amused himself for a brief while only to pass her by, forget her utterly when a fairer face shone on his path, and—oh, horror!—this fairer face was her mother's—her mother's!

A sharp pang of anguish rent her heart at the mere thought. How dared he lift his eyes to her mother—this boy, who was her junior by half-a-dozen years or more? It was horrible! His audacity deserved to be punished severely, and ought to be punished by the object of his affections. But how could that be done?



Who was to tell her that Bertram Blissington had had the audacity to lift his eyes to her—to love her?

It seemed to the girl like sacrilege for any man to look with passionate eyes on that widowed woman, who had so long devoted her life to her only child.

It would have to be prevented at any cost. It would never do for her to know that this young man had dared to do such an awful thing. Yet how was it to be prevented?

Marian did not know, as she looked across the lawn, from the bower where she was sitting to the flower-beds near the house, in which flourished the chrysanthemum trees that Mrs. Daventry was rifting.

She was not alone. No! Beside her stood Bertie, holding a pretty rustic basket, into which Josephine put the autumn blooms she nipped off.

He was bending his head down, that bright head that had so often bent over her at the piano in the old house in Gower-street, and was laughing and talking in an easy, happy fashion, that pained the jealous creature watching them inexpressibly.

There was something so familiar, so reciprocal, in their gestures and manners. They seemed to understand each other thoroughly, to be perfectly happy in each other's society, as though they wanted nothing else in the world, and it gave Marian a double stab, for she seemed to have lost lover and mother at once blow.

"How can I stop it?" she groaned, and then a shadow fell athwart her, and Ralph Overton stood before her.

"What are you soliloquising about, Marian?" he asked, as he shook hands, and retained hers in his grasp.

"Nothing!" she responded, shortly, ready to vent her rage on the first object that came to hand, and would brook bullying.

"Oh, you were, dear! I heard you say you wanted to stop something," said this foolish and devoted young man. "Let me help you!"

"You should never listen!" she exclaimed, savagely, "savesdropping is a mean, low, abominable habit that anyone ought to be ashamed of. How you have the coolness to own to it I can't understand! Most people would have the grace to be ashamed of such a performance."

"But I couldn't help it!" she expostulated, rather surprised at her bitterness and anger. "It was quite unintentional. I wouldn't listen to anything you did not wish me to hear for the world. I thought you would hear my foot-fall on the path. I made noise enough; but I suppose you were engaged in looking at the pretty little comedy being played over there," and he nodded towards Josephine and Bertie.

"What do you mean?" demanded Marian in awful tones, fixing her light blue eyes on him severely.

"Why, don't you see? Don't you understand?"

"No, I do not."

"Blissington is head over ears in love with your mother, and I, for one, wish him good luck in his wooing. For do you know, Marian, when he first came down here I thought he had come after you, and I was utterly wretched. He is such an awfully handsome fellow that an ugly devil like I am would not stand a chance against him. Now I know it is all right, that he is sweet in another quarter, and that I shall have and keep my darling all to myself!" and he looked at her a trifle idiotically, tenderness giving his surprised eyes a vacuous kind of look.

"Ralph Overton," cried the girl, furiously, rising to her feet and confronting him wrathfully, "I have never given you credit for much intellect, still I did not think until to-day that you were an absolute imbecile! And be good enough not to associate my mother's name with any man's. I forbid you! Do you hear? I forbid you!" and turning, she stalked out of the bower to the house with the

air of a tragedy queen that sat ill on her clumsy, ungainly figure.

"Whew!" whistled Ralph, gazing after her retreating figure in blank amazement. "I wonder what it was I said that offended her so? It wasn't all about her mother, though that might have riled her a bit. Good heavens!" he added a moment later, as a light seemed to break on him. "It can't be that she cares for Blissington! No, no. I can't, I won't believe that! It can't be. And yet, why should she be so annoyed? Heaven knows she doesn't care for him, for he is as mad about her mother as ever man has been over a woman. There is no hope for her with him—not even a small corner of his heart for her. Poor child!" Even in the midst of his own grief and perplexity Ralph could find time to pity the girl he loved, and it was with heavy footsteps and a still heavier heart that he retreated his steps to his own home instead of going into the Cottage, as he had intended.

## CHAPTER VI.

"I PRITHEE send me back my heart,  
Since I cannot have thine;  
For if from yours you will not part  
Why, then, shouldst thou have mine?  
Why should two hearts in one breast lie,  
And yet not lodge together?  
Oh, Love! where is thy sympathy,  
If thus our breasts thou sever?"

MARIAN walked straight into the house.

"What a fool I have been," she muttered, angrily, "since everyone seems to have seen my folly, and have thought he came down here on my account. I am rightly humiliated. To think that such a man as he is would ever have dreamt of loving such a thing as I am!" with scathing contempt, as she caught sight of her reflection in a mirror in the hall. "What an idiot I was to think it for a moment! And yet," with regretful tenderness, "he did say he could not do without me, that he wanted me for his wife! A moment of folly. That was all, and I took it seriously, like the poor fool I am! Well, I can set him free from even the shadow of a tie, as far as I am concerned, and the sooner I do it the better." So tossing her hat on to a chair she went to the drawing room, where she knew he was alone, for her grandfather was out, and her mother had gone upstairs to remove her garden hat and gloves.

The girl could hear her singing in a light-hearted fashion in that sweet, low voice that was not without its attractions, and a curious pang shot through her heart, the first of many and many an after-twing; for she realised that the woman singing overhead, though her senior in years, was her junior in every other respect, and her superior.

The drawing-room looked very cosy, with the curtains drawn and the firelight gleaming and glancing on the pretty furniture and dainty nick-nacks. There was the pleasant smell of freshly cut flowers, and a general air of homelike comfort, combined with elegance that was very attractive and delightful.

Before the fire, full in its blaze, lounging in a low, easy-chair was Bertie Blissington, and in the fingers of his right hand he held a spray of white chrysanthemums that Josephine had given him, and that seemed to him to be no whiter than her rounded throat.

He looked up in rather an annoyed fashion as Marian came in, for she generally made her *entrée* in a noisy fashion, and in that was very different from her mother.

Bertie admired Josephine's movements, that were languid, slow, and full of grace, while Marian irritated him by her jerky, violent actions and gestures, that were more like a rough boy's than a young lady's.

However, he did not display any of the irritation he felt, only looked at her inquiringly as she came and stood before him.

"You are alone?" she remarked, apparently aimlessly.

"Yes," he assented, "for the present. Mrs. Daventry will be down in a few minutes to give me the cup of tea I am longing for."

"Don't long for it too much," she said, bitterly, "or you will be disappointed and not get it."

"I don't think I shall be disappointed," he replied, with a little smile. "There are very few things that I set my heart on that I don't have."

"You are one of the lucky ones," she told him, enviously.

"Perhaps so," he rejoined, indifferently, contemplating the spray of white flowers tenderly. "My luck is not complete yet, though."

That speech reminded her of the unpleasant task that lay before her.

"Mr. Blissington," she began, formally, not looking at him, but into the red depths of the blazing fire.

"Yes," he said, quickly lifting his eyes from the flower, struck by something in her tone, and fixing them on her sombre face.

"I want to say something to you."

"Yes. I am all attention."

"You—you once said something to me," she went on, a pitiful falter in her usually even tones, "that may—make you think I consider you bound to me. But that is not the case. You are quite free! I—I—think we made a mistake. We—we—have little or nothing in common, and we should never be happy together—so—so—please consider the words unsaid!"

"You really mean this, Marian?" he asked, rather eagerly.

"Yes, I really mean it!" she responded, in a dull kind of way, though more firmly.

"Well," he said, after a short pause, and his words fell on her ears like a knell, the knell of love, and hope, and happiness, "I think you perhaps are right, and take a very sensible view of the matter. I don't think we should get on well together as husband and wife. We shall be better as friends."

"Yes, better as friends," she repeated, mechanically, her stiff lips hardly framing the words.

"You won't let this make any difference to our friendship, or the good feeling existing between us, will you?" he asked, a trifle anxiously.

"Certainly not," she said, slowly, as she moved towards the door, eager now to be away from this man whom she loved so wildly, madly, hopelessly, and whom she knew adored her mother. "It shall make no difference," and then she escaped, and went up to her room, and gave way to a perfect storm of tears, passing hours of bitter anguish alone, stricken to the heart's core by the hand she loved far more than any other on earth.

Josephine, coming downstairs a few moments later, hardly noticed her child's absence. She was well-used to Marian's erratic, uncertain ways.

If she thought about her at all, which is improbable, her mind being occupied by pleasant thoughts, she imagined that she had gone over to Hurst with Ralph, or to pay a visit of condolence to some bereaved or bed-ridden gammer or gaffer in the village.

All unknown to Mrs. Daventry Bertie Blissington had become very dear to her, had crept into her life, and made the best part of it, though she would not have owned it even to herself, much less anyone else.

Nevertheless, she was conscious that it was a pleasure to her to see him sitting there by her fireside as if he had a right to do so, and as though he found it pleasant.

"It is warmer and pleasanter in here than out in the garden," she said, as she came forward with her noiseless tread, her grey gown hanging in long straight folds to the ground, the firelight glancing on her fair, pure face, and gleaming ruddily amid the threads of her golden hair.

"Yes," he agreed, rising and drawing a chair for her near his own, "*now*. But it has been a lovely day for October."

"Delightful. It shortens the winter greatly these sunny days. We find it rather long in the country," she observed, employing herself by making the tea.

"Yes. There is not much going on to amuse ladies."

"Unless one hunts."

"Hunting is not fit for ladies. For my part I hate to see women in the field."

"So do I," agreed Mrs. Daventry. "Still, Marian hunts, and enjoys it, and I do not forbid her."

"Of course not. Still, I am glad you do not hunt," and he fixed his eyes on her in a way that made the blood mount to her cheeks, and her heart beat quicker. "Many of your tastes and ideas and mine coincide," he went on, drawing his chair closer to hers, and bending forward to look into her face.

"Do they?" she said, in a low tone, fixing her eyes on the fire, and avoiding his glance.

"Yes. You know they do. Mrs. Daventry, Josephine, you know I—love you!"

"Mr. Blissington!" she exclaimed, rising in contemplated flight, but his hand was on her arm.

"Listen to me," he implored, as she wavered and hesitated, catching his hands in his; and then they stood face to face, her eyes downcast, her bosom heaving at the suddenness of this revelation that had come upon her—upon her, a widow, a mother.

"I love you," he said again, and then as her cheeks paled he drew her into his arms, and held her against his breast, while he whispered words of passionate, adoring love into her pink ears, regardless of her feeble effort to free herself from his embrace, and kissed her eyes, and hair, and throat, and hands, and only left her lips untouched until she should promise to be his wife.

"I have loved you from the first moment I saw you—nay, before. I loved you from what I heard of you, and now I adore you. Be my wife, Josephine, love me?"

For a minute she yielded to the delight of his embrace, and leant against his breast with closed eyes, in a trance of delight. Then came the remembrance of her child, of her widowhood, of her father, and with a gesture of repulse she freed herself from her lover's arms.

"It is impossible. You make a mistake!" she said, with assumed coldness. "I cannot be your wife," and without waiting to hear another word she hurriedly left the room.

Bertie felt stunned at first. Her repulse of him was so unexpected, and, overwhelmed with shame at his audacity, he felt inclined to rush out of the house, and never see her again. Then, as he thought of her lying on his breast, and her heart throbbing against his, he took courage, and appeared at dinner, and chatted as though nothing out of the common had happened, while Josephine, though a little pale, was just as suave and graceful in her manners as usual.

However, she avoided being alone with him, and it was three days before he got an opportunity of speaking to her again about that which lay next to his heart.

The Captain and Marian were going a-hunting. Ralph, having got over his snub, had ridden over to ride with them to the meet, and one of his grooms had brought a pair of hunters for Bellamy and Miss Daventry to ride, while Josephine and Bertie watched them mount from the porch.

Marian looked absolutely frightened on horseback. Her square, high-shouldered figure was not set off to advantage by the tight-fitting habit, while the round, stiff, felt-hat she wore, made her look villainously ugly and unwomanly.

"Thank Heaven, she set me free of herself," thought Bertie, as the trio rode off. "I never could have married her and been happy. I suppose she means going for young Overton. He is better sport than I am," and, turning on his heel, he went into the dining-room, where he found Josephine had retreated on the depar-

ture of the others, not thinking he would come there.

"Mrs. Daventry," he began, at once going up to her and standing beside her in a masterful sort of way that made her heart quake and yet thrill with delight, "I think you have been very cruel to me these last three days!"

"Cruel, Mr. Blissington?" she faltered, bending over the flower-vase she was arranging to hide the blush that rose to her face at his words.

"Yes! You have avoided me pointedly, though you must have known I was longing to have a few words alone with you."

"I—I—did not—know that."

"I have been miserable because I fear I offended you the other day," he said, in a straightforward, manly way. "I want to beg your pardon very humbly, and to ask you to let the great love I bear you be my apology. Will you forgive me?"

"There is nothing to forgive," she replied, with one swift glance at his face.

"You are not angry?" he asked, joyfully.

"No."

"If you could only understand how much I love you," he said, passionately, "you would listen to me."

"I must not," she objected.

"Why not?" he urged, drawing a little nearer.

"There is Marian."

"She need be no obstacle between us."

"Then my age. I am older than you," she urged, feeling the ground giving way beneath her feet.

"As though that need matter!" he exclaimed, with fond contempt, daring to pass his arm round the graceful figure that half-shrunk from and half-clung to him. "I am getting older every day, and you are so young-looking; and, moreover, I can't do without you."

"Say rather 'will not,' Bertie," she murmured.

"No. Cannot. That is the right word. I have loved you since the instant my eyes first lit on you. You have grown, even in the short time I have known you, to be the best part of my life! If you were my wife I should be perfectly content, perfectly happy! Happier than I could ever be in Heaven!"

"Don't say that!" she exclaimed, gently. "Perfect happiness is not permitted us here. I feel as though we might be punished for such a speech."

"Why should we be? We are both young. Life lies before us a path of roses if we wed! What would our lives be now apart? Tell me, Josephine?" looking down fondly into the fair, blushing face, that showed signs of deep emotion.

"Miserable," she murmured.

"Then, darling!" he went on, passionately, "give me what I crave for! Let us be happy while we can! Be my beloved wife!" and he held out his arms; and for all answer she crept into them, and laid her head on his breast with a sigh of content, while he held her crushed up against him, as though he never meant to let her go again!

[THE END.]

A NOVEL and remarkable remedy for the restoration of hearing was tried by a doctor in Rhondda, Wales. Nearly nine years ago, David Davies, a miner, was the victim of a terrible explosion, and the shock made him deaf and dumb, besides causing wounds which crippled him for several years. When he became able to leave his bed, his doctor placed him beside a big gun during target practice. After the sixth shot his hearing came suddenly back to him, but he remained dumb. The other day one of his companions said something to him that put him in a towering passion, and his speech returned in a flood of profanity.

## FACETIE.

STRANGER: "What, in connection with bicycle riding, strikes you most forcibly?"

Bicycle rider: "The road."

"What are you pouting about, Johnny?"

"Billy's real mean."

"What's the matter?"

"I eat all my candy, and Billy won't give me any of his."

NOTHING HALF WAY ABOUT HIM.—Brown: "It's too bad about Jorgeson drinking so. He's not half a bad fellow."

Jones: "No. He's a whole one."

You can always tell the travelling bridegroom who has been married the second time. He always knows just when to let go when coming out of the railroad tunnel.

PATIENT: "That medicine you gave me for my cold, doctor, cured me entirely." Doctor (in surprise): "Did it? Well, blamed I don't believe I'll try it myself. I can't get rid of mine."

FAIR YOUNG CREATURE (after some recitations): "Do you think I would do for a 'Juliet'?" Manager (anxious not to hurt feelings): "Um—er—well, you'd look very pretty in the tomb."

PONSONBY: "I understand that Digby's wife is deaf and dumb." Snagge: "That so? Wonder if she converses with her fingers?" Ponsonby: "Guess so. Digby is about the baldest man I ever saw."

"Love is blind." Nonsense! Just pay a little attention to some other woman, and the woman who loves you will see it even if the transaction occurs ten miles away, with half a hundred brick walls intervening.

MRS. BONBINE (just awakened): "George, my dear, do you love me as much as you did when we were first married?" Mr. Bonbine: "Why, certainly, my darling."

"Well, then, hustle out and start a fire in the kitchen."

"If you want to see a man," said his wife, as he rose from his seat, "can't you stay here and see him if you use the opera glasses?" "They're not strong enough," he objected; "I can get better glasses outside," and he vanished.

AS SHE IS SPOKE.—He: "Now that you have made me the happiest of mortals, can I kiss you?" She (Boston): "Never having had any personal experience of your osculatory abilities, Mr. Gerner, I do not know if you can, but you may."

HOTEL PROPRIETOR: "Sorry, sir, but you will have to leave the house. I hear you were seen kissing the lady you talked to so long on the piazza, last night, and such things are not allowed here." Guest (indignantly): "It's a slander, sir! I didn't kiss her, and I can prove it. Why! that lady was my wife!"

"J. JOHN, d-dear," she sobbed, "d-did you ever think how near death is to us all? Wh-what would you ever d-do, dear J-John, if I should d-d-die?" "Well," said John, musingly, "I don't know as I had ever thought of it before, my dear, but now you speak of it, my first impression is that I should bury you."

A JURY OF HIS PEERS.—"Prisoner," said the Judge to a very disreputable citizen who was brought in by the bailiff, "you are to have the privilege of being tried by a jury of your peers." "Does that mean my equals, judge?" "Yes, sir." "Don't do it, judge. Ye can't get none nowheres without sendin' back the van to the jail for another load of prisoners."

ONE of the Board of Education, going his rounds as an amateur, put the following question to a scholar in a country school: "How do you parse, 'Mary milked the cow?'" Pupil: "Cow is a noun, feminine gender, singular number, third person, and stands for Mary." "Stands for Mary!" exclaimed he of the Board; "how do you make that out?" "Because," added the intelligent pupil, "if the cow didn't stand for Mary, how could Mary milk her?"



## SOCIETY.

THE latest fad is a finger-ring of blackened steel with a small brilliant stone buried in it.

PRINCESS BEATRICE seems to be the only Royal lady available at present for the work of giving prizes and opening bazaars.

THE bygone style of dressing-table has been revived and old silk and muslin dresses and petticoats cut up for mirror ruffs and valances.

THE Queen of Italy once tried to write a novel. It was enthusiastically praised by the court ladies when one day she read them a few chapters. She was bright enough to wish a less partial test, so she sent it under an assumed name to a leading publisher, who politely declined to accept it.

SOMEBODY wants to know: How is it in fashionable weddings, that we always have a catalogue of the bride's wearing apparel, while we never hear of the groom having so much as a pair of new socks?

ALTHOUGH the public do not know it, the route of the Queen, both by road and rail, is usually under police surveillance from end to end. Out of Russia such precautions may seem a little overdone, but the Queen is a very nervous traveller, and insists upon the utmost vigilance.

LORD SALISBURY has returned from Dorsetshire very much improved in health, and the rest has set him up. There is no disguising the fact, however, that his increasing size gives great anxiety to his friends, and his disinclination to taking exercise adds to it. It is said that he now weighs over eighteen stone, which is a great deal for a man of his height and physique.

THE health of the King of Holland has undergone so marked an improvement that he was able to take a more prominent part in the recent festivities on his seventy-third birthday than was originally intended. Accompanied by his youthful daughter, William III. passed slowly down the reception room to address some complimentary remark in person to each of his guests.

ANYONE happening to pass Marlborough House at the moment the Prince of Wales's carriage was returning home may have noticed how the great gates have flown open as if by magic, and the carriage swept in at full speed. This is due to the vigilance of the police, who signal the Prince's approach to each other along the line of route.

It is suggested that for enterprising women, it would be worth while to let the public know that they are engaged in a useful business. There is an opening of which one little woman in America has availed herself, in mending looks, trunks, bags, window fastenings, and the like—an easy and not unprofitable business, which is almost altogether in the hands of a rough class of men. Women would greatly prefer employing women for such work.

THE famous malachite vase in the State apartments at Windsor, presented by the Emperor Nicholas to the Queen, is no longer the finest thing of its kind. It is quite eclipsed by that presented by the present Czar to Lord Revelstoke, and now at Membrand Park, South Devon, which is both bigger and handsomer, and of greater intrinsic value than that in the possession of the Queen.

ONE of the most notable and expensive bouquets ever got up in New York was carried at a Patriarch's Ball. The affair was made up of mignonette ivy, and greenly tinted orchids, and was what is known among the florists as a green bouquet. The notable and unusual thing about the bouquet, however, was the fact of its being fitted up with tiny electric lights. The lights were furnished with electricity from a small battery which the fair wearer had disposed somewhere about her costume, and she could turn the illumination on or off at pleasure.

## STATISTICS.

STATISTICS show that the deaths from hydrophobia have been fewer during 1888 than since 1868. The decrease may be attributed to two causes—first, the enforced muzzling of dogs; secondly, the discovery that symptoms heretofore thought to attest the disease were the signs of some other.

GOLD MINING in Australia for the year 1889 did not prove so profitable as in the year that preceded it. In 1888 the total amount of gold won from the mines was 636,200 ounces, while last year the approximate return was 626,100 ounces—or 10,100 ounces less than that of its predecessor. This decrease is mainly attributable to capital being diverted to the silver mines and other speculations.

By the ravages of wolves Russia loses every year domestic animals to the value of £2,000,000, and game to the value of more than £7,000,000. So Dr. Lampert says in the *Humboldt*. But with her dense forest, far-stretching borders, and thin population, Russia will find it no easy matter to get rid of the wolves. Even in France they cannot exterminate the ravenous brutes by killing them at the rate of 700 per annum.

## GEMS.

Be yourself. Ape no greatness. Be willing to pass for what you are. A good farthing is better than a bad sovereign. Affect no coldness; but dare to be right though you have to be singular.

See that your child never leaves any task half done or finished in a slovenly manner; and therefore give not too many tasks. Thoroughness is the corner-stone of success. There is no place in the world now for smatterers, who know a little and only a little, of everything under the sun. There is always an honourable place for those who can do any kind of honest work in the best manner.

THERE is no such thing as utter failure to one who has done his best. Were this truth more often emphasized there would be more courage and energy infused into sad and desponding hearts. The compensation may seem shadowy and afar off, but it is not so. It attends every one who is conscientious, painstaking, and resolute, and will never desert him, whatever may be the fate of his exertions in other respects.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

**BREAKFAST DISH OF COLD MEAT.**—Cut the meat in pieces about an inch square; put them into a stewpan with some butter or a little of the cold gravy. Season with pepper and salt. As soon as the meat is very hot, add a little flour to thicken the gravy, and serve.

**ORANGE CAKE.**—Beat one cup of butter and one-half a pound of powdered sugar together until very light; then add a small cup of sweet milk and the whites of four eggs beaten to a stiff froth; add flour enough to make a good batter, and one teaspoonful of baking powder, the grated rind and juice of one orange, and the juice of half a lemon; beat until very smooth, and bake in jelly cake tins.

**A GOOD LIGHT CAKE.**—Three cups of very light dough, two and one-half cups of sugar, one cup of butter, three eggs, one nutmeg, one pint of chopped raisins, one teaspoonful of soda dissolved in warm water. Rub the butter and sugar together thoroughly with the dough, beat it well, add a little dry flour to make it smooth, pour into the pans. It will be much lighter if allowed to stand and rise, but it can be baked immediately. It is very important that the ingredients be thoroughly mixed with the dough.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

THE first knives were used in England, and the first wheeled carriage in France in 1559.

ONE glorious triumph for literature in the future will be the adoption of a universal language.

A LADY who was married at ninety-two years of age has just died in America at the age of one hundred and seven.

UMBRELLAS are being imported into India in great numbers. Last year two hundred and seventy thousand arrived in Calcutta alone.

THE New York letter carriers find a good many empty purses in the letter boxes. Pick-pockets think it safer to drop them there than on the sidewalks.

SIBERIA is said to have a spot of ground about thirty miles square that has not thawed out for a hundred years, and is frozen to a depth of sixty feet.

GERMANY is the only civilized country in the world where murderers are still beheaded with an axe or sword. Just before Christmas two men were executed by decapitation with a broadaxe.

DESTRUCTIVE insects have alarmingly increased in Australia since the advent of the English sparrows there. The latter drove out many of the native birds, and the insects therefore rapidly multiplied.

In case of a bite from a rabid dog, Dr. Billings, of New York, recommends that the wound be cankerized with strong carbolic acid. It is much less painful and more effective than with a hot iron. The wounds will also heal in less time.

A NEW railway brake has been invented in England, and successfully tested in Birmingham. The electro-magnet is ingeniously used in arresting the motion of every wheel in a train, and the force can be applied throughout a train in a second and a-half.

A CLEVER young doctor on the staff of the Chelsea Hospital for Women has invented a machine by means of which cancer can be cured by a current of electricity. To those who have seen the appalling suffering of cancer victims the news seems well-nigh too good to be true.

It is a little hard that just as we are getting rid of the influenza we should be threatened with a renewed outbreak of that irrepressible personage, "the Claimant." Next month, he declares, the reopening of his case will be commenced—a terrible prospect for all who remember the interminable length of the original trial.

WERE any proof needed of the absurd anomalies which mark our ocean-postage rates, it would be found in the fact that while it costs 5s. to send a letter from this country to India, the rate from the United States to the same place is only 2½d, though the American mails for India are conveyed *via* England. This is about the height of absurdity.

THERE was a time when a "woman journalist" was said to be as rare as a white black-bird, but we have in this as in several other matters relating to the conduct of our newspapers, followed American lead; the number of ladies who are on the paid staffs of the newspapers in the United Kingdom is rapidly increasing, and budding aspirants are to be found everywhere.

A VERY useful invention, tending to lessen the possibility of accidents in factories, is now being extensively adopted in England. The breaking of a glass, which is adjusted against the wall of every room in the mill, will at once stop the engine, an electric current being established between the room and the throttle valve of the engine, shutting off the steam in an instant. By this means the engine was stopped at one of the mills recently in a few seconds, and a young girl, whose clothes had become entangled in an upright shaft, was released uninjured.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**CLARA.**—An engagement ring is placed on the third finger of the left hand.

**NATIVE.**—The name of the town of Evesham is pronounced as if spelt "E'ham."

**M's DARLING.**—We never heard of the article having any effect on the colour of the hair.

**D. D.**—If your whole income is under £150 you are not liable to income-tax on any account.

**BOB.**—The Prime Minister of England has a legal right to leave the country during his tenure of office.

**WESTWORTH.**—You had better write to the Emigrants' Information Office, 31, Broadway, Westminster.

**MARY.**—Dr. Barnardo's principal "Home" is in 8, Spence Causeway, London, E. You must write to him there.

**STOCKMAN.**—The Great Western Railway has 2,461 engines in work; the London and North-Western 1,877 engines.

**A. G.**—Chemists and druggists may prepare and dispense medicines, but must not give advice to or attend patients.

**SAM.**—It is perfectly legal to play cards in public-houses, if no money or beer or stakes of any kind are played for.

**DRIVER.**—The dates on which turnpikes were removed differ in almost every locality. Some were removed as early as 1837, and some only last year.

**IVY.**—Coloured cloaks are decidedly in the ascendant. For overalls they are most convenient, a smart or shabby gown (as the case may be) can be equally well hidden.

**TOOL CHEST.**—The saw is a tool of very great antiquity. It is figured on some of the oldest Egyptian monuments, and is mentioned many times in the early books of the Old Testament.

**ASSAM.**—There are several newspapers published in connection with scholastic matters. You had better write to one of them. We can hardly give you much comprehensive information as you require.

**ALPHA.**—The line—  
"The conscious water saw its God and blushed,"  
is from the translation of a Latin epigram made by Richard Crasshaw, a seventeenth century poet.

**A. BOYD.**—1. "Ex all" signifies the exclusion of everything in the nature of dividend or bonus; "ex n." signifies the exclusion of a special right to take up new stock. 2. The rate of stamp-duty on stamps is 2s. 6d. per £25, on the purchase-money.

**UNCERTAIN.**—If you delight in the society of the intelligent and intellectual, do not imagine you could be happy with a girl whose chief pleasure consists in dancing, dressing and dissipation. She would soon become an intolerable weariness to you.

**J. S.**—It is too true that a high state of mental cultivation is too often attained at the expense of bodily health. We seldom find the health of those who devote themselves sedulously to literary pursuits, or the learned professions, to be perfectly sound.

**NED.**—A man should be careful how he pays a young lady friendly attention in such a manner that she may mistake his friendship for love. When such a catastrophe comes about, the man who permits it is apt to be chargeable with the greatest portion of the blame.

**GOLDEN HAIR.**—Salts of tartar (carbonate of potash) is the principal article used for shampooing the head and hair. Dissolve one ounce of tartar in one quart of soft water; sprinkle freely on the head and rub well until a lather is formed. Wash off with clean water.

**A. L. W.**—We have no record of the exact height of General Tom Thumb when he died. He was by no means a very small dwarf in the latter years of his life. He grew a great deal after he was first exhibited. Someone connected with "Barnum's" would doubtless be able to tell you.

**SEASIDE BAL.**—Quicksand is composed chiefly of small particles of mica mixed largely with water. The mica is so smooth that the fragments slip upon each other with the greatest facility, so that any heavy body which displaces them will sink and continue to sink until a solid bottom is reached.

**MEDICUS.**—Medical students commonly begin their course of study with chemistry, anatomy, histology and physiology, and then proceed to materia medica, pathology, surgery, etc., etc., each student concluding with the speciality which he intends to follow, providing he does not intend to gain a general practice.

**GLADYS.**—Perhaps you are naturally short; some persons are so. Height, like every other characteristic, is apt to run in families. If you are too stout avoid eating sweet things and potatoes; take no malt liquor, and make sure of plenty of walking exercise. Like stature, superfluous flesh is apt to be constitutional and hereditary.

**RACHEL.**—An old-fashioned wash for the hair is made by dissolving half-an-ounce of carbonate of ammonia and one ounce of borax in one quart of water, and adding thereto two ounces of glycerine, three quarts of New England rum, and one quart of bay rum. The hair having been moistened with this liquor, is to be shampooed with the hands until a slight lather is formed, and the latter being then washed out with clear water, leaves the head clean, and the hair moist and glossy.

**NINA.**—There is no law against using superlatives in conversation, and occasions may arise when the use of superlatives in conversation would be quite proper. Such a matter must be governed by taste and judgment. The trouble with young people as to this matter is, that they seldom use anything but superlatives to express their admiration or displeasure.

**INTERESTED.**—The Tay Bridge is two miles long, and the Forth Bridge a mile-and-a-half; but the latter is infinitely the more considerable engineering feat. The Forth Bridge, which is on the cantilever system, has but four spans, and gives a headway at high water of 153 feet. The Tay Bridge has eighty-five spans, and gives a headway of 90 feet only.

**TARA.**—In Germany wherever women can be employed to advantage they are taken in preference to men. At the railway stations girls act as ticket collectors, and girls are cashiers in all the cafés and restaurants; and at Munich the clerks and book-keepers in the banks are nearly all young girls, who are experts in figures, and in mental arithmetic have no superiors.

**WOULD-BE-ACTOR.**—A man with little experience on the stage, on joining a theatrical company, would have to take an inferior part, with meagre pay. He might subsequently be promoted according to the degree of ability he exhibited. For every actor who makes a good living out of his profession, there are half-a-dozen who make a bare sufficiency, or are in indigence.

## LOVE'S FIRST KISS.

## I.

He spoke of rising at early morn,  
He spoke of ploughing and planting corn,  
Of hay, and the blowing wheat;  
Of ows, of milk, of butter, and cheese,  
Of flowers, and thyme, and the honey bees,  
And the orchard apples sweet.

## II.

And she listened with pleasant face,  
As she went about the household place,  
Never too busy to find  
The thoughtful word, or the word of cheer,  
Or the one which showed she did not fear  
To honestly speak her mind.

## III.

But though the summer and winter sped,  
Never a word of love he said;  
And she thought, "He's but a friend!"  
Yet still at the thought she grew more shy,  
And still at the thought her heart would sigh,  
And wonder how it would end.

## IV.

One bright May night, at the garden gate,  
"Mollie," he said, "I have tried to wait  
Till I knew if we could find,  
As loving husband and loving wife,  
In the thousand things that make up life,  
True fellowship of mind."

## V.

"And now I know that my heart was right,  
As it whispered me that April night,  
When we met a year ago;  
'There is the girl you will love through life,  
There is the girl to seek for a wife,'—  
Oh, Mollie, is it so?"

## VI.

"Willie," she said, "no doubt you were wise,  
But yet, had you trusted your heart and eyes,  
You would have been wiser, dear."  
Then, smiling, she gave him love's first kiss;  
And Willie sighed in his new-found bliss—  
"I have lost one long, sweet year!"

L. E. B.

**E. A.**—The *o* in the word is a diphthong and is pronounced as in "noise." Both the *o* and the *i* are sounded in the word. The *n* following the *o* makes it somewhat difficult in rapid speaking to pronounce "oins" as one syllable. The word comes from the Italian *conio*, and preceding that, from the Latin *cuneus*, but it follows English rules in pronunciation.

**SUFFERER.**—Nuts are indigestible things at best; but if we eat them, a little salt taken dry on the tongue after will prevent any ill effects. Nothing we eat needs more thorough mastication than nuts before being fit for the human stomach. If swallowed in too coarse a condition they are apt to make a short stop in some of the narrower passages of the digestive organs with fatal results.

**REMEMBRANCE.**—Lethes, in Grecian mythology, was the personification of oblivion, and was called by Hebe a daughter of Rhea. It was also a stream of silver-clearness in Hades, from which the shades drank forgetfulness of their earthly life, or at least of all their sorrows. According to Virgil, also, those souls destined to return to new bodies on earth drank of its waters, in order to forget Elysium.

**DIDO.**—The number of books in the Old Testament is 39; the number of chapters, 939; the number of verses, 23,214; the number of words, 592,493; the number of letters, 2,728,100. The number of books in the New Testament is 27; the number of chapters, 280; the number of verses, 7,950; the number of words, 181,253; the number of letters, 838,380. Total number of letters in the Old and New Testament, 3,566,480. The Apocrypha has 183 chapters, 6,081 verses, and 125,185 words.

**FRIEND ALICE.**—An engagement ring is not necessary. It is merely a matter of fashion. Many young ladies do not care to wear an open sign of betrothal. It is quite another matter when the young man wishes to keep the affair secret from the friends of both parties. In that case, we should advise you to be very careful how you pledge yourself to him. As to the outside world, it is no business of anyone's, and love affairs are generally private.

**BETHSHEBAH.**—You probably spend too much time in promiscuous reading. There is no reason why a healthy young man of eighteen, of fair intellect and studious habits, should not be able to keep up with his class in college. Until you graduate, you should make the study of your text-books, and the keeping up of your rank in the class, your first objects. If, in addition to these, you have leisure to indulge your taste for general reading, indulge it; otherwise, do not.

**LILLIE.**—No advertisement was enclosed in your letter, so we cannot answer that part of your question. There are no assisted passages to the Colonies now; but you will get all information by going or writing to the Emigration Inquiry Office, Broadway, Westminster. You will learn there where servants are most wanted in the Colonies, and whether it would be suitable for you to go. From all we know on the subject we should not advise any young girl to go out alone, unless she was quite sure what was before her at the end of the voyage.

**M. M. M.**—Silver-ware furnishes one of the most reliable means of detecting defective drainage. If it is covered with a black coating, or tarnished, soon after being cleaned, and after a third cleaning again becomes darkened, one may be certain that there is some trouble with the drainage system of the house. The agent which furnishes the tarnishing is not sewer gas itself, as it is commonly supposed, but a gas which always accompanies it, called sulphuretted hydrogen. It is the same gas which is generated in decaying eggs and other putrefying animal and vegetable matters.

**MARCUS.**—When you get a cinder or speck of dust or other offensive particle in your eye, do not rub it. Do not touch it. Do not pull down the lid. Do not put your hand near it. Let it alone. This is very hard advice to follow, and in nine cases out of ten you will find yourself rubbing your eye before you know it. But if you can refrain from touching your eye at all, the action of that organ will itself cast out the offending mote in much quicker time, and with far less irritation, while your efforts would only hinder it and perhaps fasten the intruder so that it will stay a long time.

**TARST.**—If the name of this island means the land of ice, as is no doubt the case, then the name is misleading, for, excepting the great ice streams in the interior of the ice called glaciers, there is otherwise very little ice in it. The harbours are open nearly the whole year, and the climate is milder than that of Norway. Sometimes the northern and eastern coast are blocked up with ice which has drifted before the wind from Greenland, but this happens only about once every ten years. Then, perhaps, the island is an ice land, but in any other sense the title is an unfortunate blunder.

**IRISH NELL.**—1. Most likely your cold nose is constitutional. It often goes with a tendency to cold hands and feet. 2. Your question is a little obscure. If you offer a gentleman wine a blacuit can be brought out with it; but it is scarce & necessary to offer refreshment at an ordinary call. No lady ever offers anything to a gentleman at a public bar, if any chance or necessity should take her to such a place. 3. You had better ask a medical man about your throat. 4. Use glycerine at night and sleep in gloves. 5. Word the notes as you think best, there is no rule. The most informal invitations are the pleasantest. 6. You appear to be very well proportioned. 7. The writing is very much in need of practice.

**CYCLIST.**—The dandy-horse was supported by two light wheels, running in the same line, the front wheel running on a pivot, which by means of a short lever gave the direction in turning to one side or the other, the hind wheel always running in one direction. The rider sat in a saddle always placed in the middle between the two wheels. In these points the dandy-horse resembled a bicycle; but there were no treadles. The feet were placed flat on the ground, so that in the first step to give the machine motion, the heel would be part of the foot on the ground. In the front part, before the rider, was placed a cushion to rest the arms on while the hands held the lever which gave direction to the machine, as also to balance it. The inventor was Baron von Drais, a gentleman at the Court of the Grand Duke of Baden, and it was introduced into this country in 1819.

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